

■ CRASH BANDICOOT 3 ■ TEKKEN 3 ■ TOMB RAIDER 3 ■ COLIN MCRAE RALLY ■ SHANE WARNE CRICKET ■

■ FI ■ WIPEOUT 2097 ■ MEDIEVIL ■ EVERYBODY'S GOLF ■ MORTAL KOMBAT 4 ■ GRAN TURISMO ■ ABE'S EXODUS ■ RESIDENT EVIL 2

■ DUKE NUKEM ■ BUSHIDO BLADE ■ COOL BOARDERS ■ FIFA '99 ■ X-MEN VS STREETFIGHTER ■ SPICE WORLD ■ TOGA 2 ■ POINT BLANK

PlayStation 1999 YEARBOOK

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Playstation Magazine

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36 of the best
games of all
time reviewed

ON THE CD:

10 OF THE BEST PLAYABLE PLAYSTATION DEMOS EVER!

Colin McRae Rally
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Tomb Raider 1
Gran Turismo
Tekken 2
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Bomberman World
Kula World
Rocks And Gems
Circuit Breakers *

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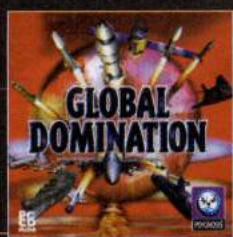
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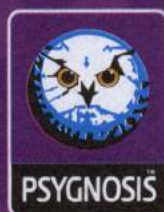
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PlayStation 1999 YEARBOOK

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C O N T E N T S

Welcome to the
1999 PlayStation Yearbook.

In it, we've put together a collection of the past year's best PlayStation games so you know what to look for when it comes to buying your next game, or one for someone else. All the big titles are in here, and for all the different styles of games available, whatever your preference, plus a sneak peek at the big games for the coming year.

We've also got a full round-up of everything that goes with your PlayStation and beyond, from humble joypads to the black

PlayStation which lets you make your own games.

And don't miss our exclusive Demo CD with playable demos of 10 top PlayStation games that you simply must play.

So whether you've had a PlayStation for years, or just got one this Christmas, sit back, relax and enjoy the 1999 PlayStation Yearbook!

ANDREW IREDALE,
Editor

6 Demo CD guide

A whopping 10 playable demos of the best PlayStation games ever is affixed to the cover of this magazine, turn to our full guide to get the most out of them. Full controls listed for all games.

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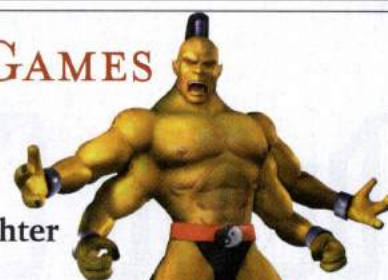
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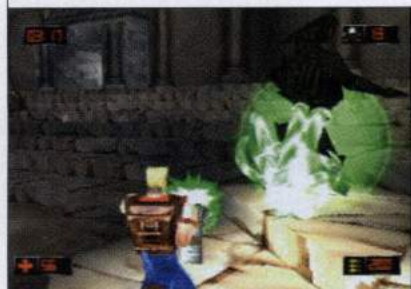
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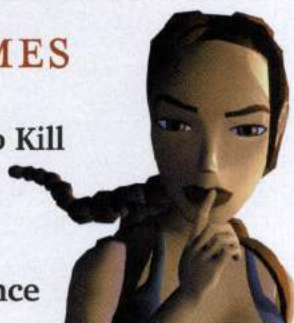
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Demo CD guide

We've got 10 of the best PlayStation demos ever to grace the cover of a magazine, plus a complete Yaroze game. The first two Tomb Raider games are here to prepare you for Lara's latest adventure, driving enthusiasts are well catered for with Gran Turismo and Colin McRae, fighting fanatics will find fun in Tekken 2 and the bouncy Dead Or Alive, plus four other top-notch demos for your enjoyment. So why are you still reading this? Get that CD into your PlayStation now!

BY: EIDOS

STYLE: 3D ACTION

PLAYERS: ONE

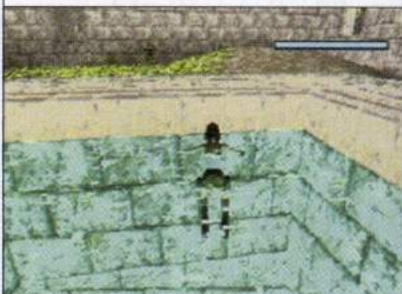
Tomb Raider

The original Tomb Raider would have to be credited with setting the standard for 3D adventure titles on all game platforms. This was the first game where the world was introduced to the lovely Lara Croft and such was her appeal that Tomb Raider was quickly followed up with even better sequels. The intuitive style of gameplay is what made Tomb Raider stand out, with a nice mix of puzzle solving and adventure. With Lara being able to perform moves like shimmying, jumping, rolling, backward somersaults and her famous swan dive, she out manoeuvres any action/adventure characters by far.

This demo will give you a good example of what Lara can do and what to expect from Tomb Raider, it's from the second level of the game, City of Vilacamba where you have to deal with a pack of wolves, a bear and some troublesome bats. The important thing to remember is to make good use of the roll move whenever under attack from animals. Also make sure to explore the whole level so you don't miss any pick ups or medi-packs.

Controls

UP - Run/swim down
DOWN - Hop backwards/swim up
LEFT - Rotate/swim left
RIGHT - Rotate/swim right
O - Roll
X - Action
□ - Jump/breaststroke
△ - Draw/holster gun
R1 - Walk/shimmy right
L1 - Move camera/shimmy left
R2 - Sidestep right
L2 - Sidestep left
START - Pause
SELECT - Inventory



BY: EIDOS
 STYLE: 3D ACTION
 PLAYERS: ONE

Tomb Raider 2

In Tomb Raider 2, Lara is searching for the Dagger of Xian which takes her to even more strange places while confronting even stranger enemies including a yeti, sharks, oil rig workers and frogmen. If you thought the first Tomb Raider was tough, wait until you try out the second instalment.

When put together, Tomb Raider and Tomb Raider 2 represent the best there is in the 3D adventure genre. If you thought Tomb Raider was brilliant then prepare yourself because Tomb Raider 2 is stacks better than the awesome original. With a heap of new enemies, some new fancy locales from opera houses to sunken ships and even nicer graphics, Tomb Raider 2 is one excellent sequel. This demo previews the first stage of the game which is set around and in the Great Wall Of China, it'll give you a good idea as to exactly how much better this sequel is as far as level design is concerned.

Other game improvements include, more diverse and cunning enemies, larger levels, three more stages and this time around Lara changes costume to match her surroundings. For example, she wears a wetsuit in the sunken ship level.

Controls

UP - Run forward
 DOWN - Jump back
 LEFT - Turn left
 RIGHT - Turn right
 Δ - Draw/holster weapon
 O - Roll
 □ - Jump
 X - Action/fire weapon
 R1 - Walk
 L1 - Move camera
 R2 - Sidestep
 L2 - Light/throw flare
 START - Pause
 SELECT - Inventory



Gran Turismo

PUBLISHER: SONY
 STYLE: DRIVING SIMULATION
 PLAYERS: 1-2

Controls

D-PAD - Direction
 X - Accelerate
 □ - Brake
 O - Hand brake
 Δ - Reverse
 R2 - Shift up
 L2 - Shift down
 R1 - Change view
 L1 - Rear view
 START - Pause/menu settings

If you've heard a lot about Gran Turismo and how great a game everyone says it is, but have never played it, prepare to be impressed beyond your wildest dreams. The full version is the best driving game ever, boasting a huge three hundred cars, nine different classes of license and well over a dozen courses to test the best drivers.

Although there's only one track and three cars available, it's enough to give new comers a taste of just how huge and brilliant this game is. Just about all the options have been disabled but you can still access all areas to give some idea of what's available in the full version, while you're also free to peruse the car yards and drool over all the awesome cars.

Available on this demo is the Honda NSX, Corvette and Subaru WRX Impreza all of which you can change the paint job on and you can also choose manual or auto transmission. The track is the Clubman Stage - Route 5 which is timed but there is time to do at least one lap. This is a fantastic track that's set at night, which really shows off the games stunning graphics.





Tekken 2

BY: NAMCO

STYLE: 3D FIGHTING

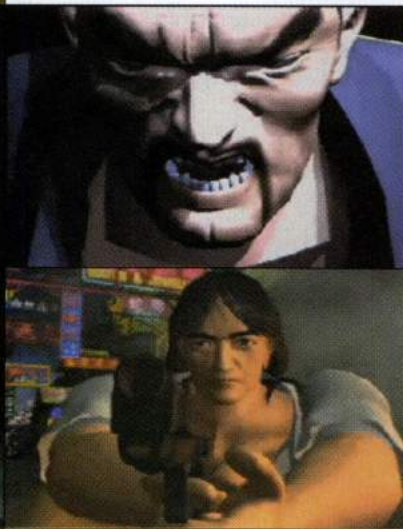
PLAYERS: 1 - 2

Controls

UP - Jump
DOWN - Crouch
RIGHT - Forward/back/block
LEFT - Forward/back/block
△ - Right arm punch
□ - Left arm punch
○ - Right foot kick
× - Left foot kick
START - Pause/menu options

The Tekken series is without a doubt the greatest 3D fighting series ever made. If you've never played any of them then you'll be happy to know that we've included Tekken 2 on our demo. Maybe not as polished as Tekken 3, Tekken 2 is still a beaut fighting game. In the full version there's twenty two characters in total although some of these have to be unlocked. Also in the full version is all the game modes including survival, team battle, time attack and practice mode.

On the demo there's 2 characters that you can play as, Lei who is a street wise cop and Jun who is an acrobat. Each time you play the demo you'll come up against a different fighter effectively allowing you to play against the whole team from Tekken 2. It's a brilliant game made even better by the fact that it's now a Platinum title available for around forty dollars.



Colin McRae Rally

BY: CODEMASTERS

STYLE: DRIVING

PLAYERS: 1 - 2

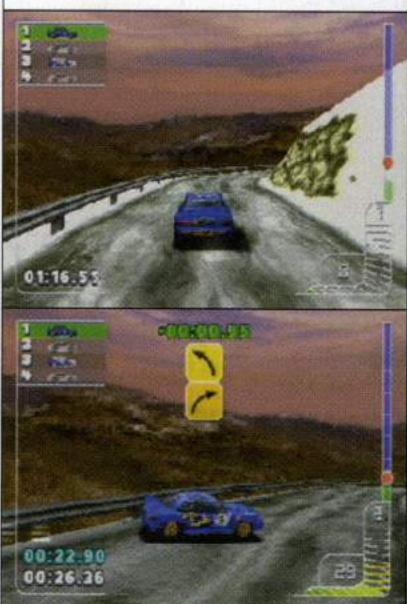
If Gran Turismo is the worlds best driving sim then Colin McRae World Rally is the best rally sim. With a massive forty eight tracks in the full version and twelve of the best rally cars, this game has enough to keep the fussiest driving fan happy. The handling of the cars is perhaps the most accurate that has ever appeared in a driving game with the difference between driving on tar and snow noticeably different. It takes a bit of getting used to but most people fall in love with this great game after their first turn.

Codemasters has been very generous with this demo by giving us three huge tracks to race around in Colin's own WRX.

The three tracks on offer are the New Zealand stage, the Monte Carlo stage which is very hard and there's an Australian track set in the dusty and bumpy outback. In the full version there's all the best cars including the new Corolla WRC and the awesome Mitsubishi Lancer EVO. Pure driving bliss.

Controls

D-PAD - Direction
× - Accelerate
□ - Brake
○ - Handbrake
△ - Change camera
START - Pause/menu options



Cool Boarders 2

BY: SONY

STYLE: SNOWBOARDING

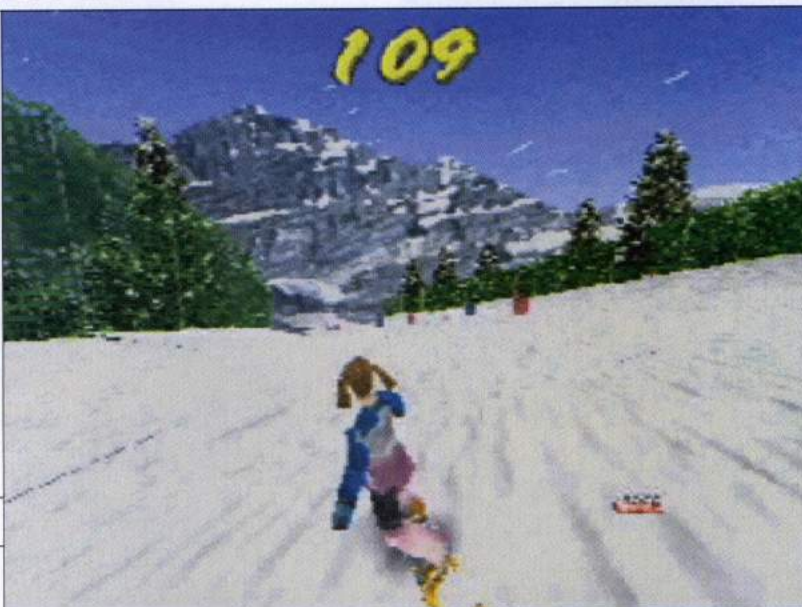
PLAYERS: 1 - 2

If Tekken is the king of fighting games then the Coolboarders series is the king of snowboarding titles that are available. This is a fantastic demo that allows you to choose from all four of the available characters, mess about with their trendy threads, pick out which of the board styles you want and then head for the slopes.

There's only one track available which is the Snowboard Park where you can become an expert at slalom, half-pipe and trick jumping. This demo will allow you to become quite good before heading out to buy the full copy.

Controls

LEFT - Turn right
RIGHT - Turn left
UP - Improved balance
DOWN - Speed up
□ - Tight turns
UP + R2 - Grab board
X - Jump
△ - Change view
R1 - Fakie



Circuit Breakers

BY: MINDSCAPE

STYLE: RACING

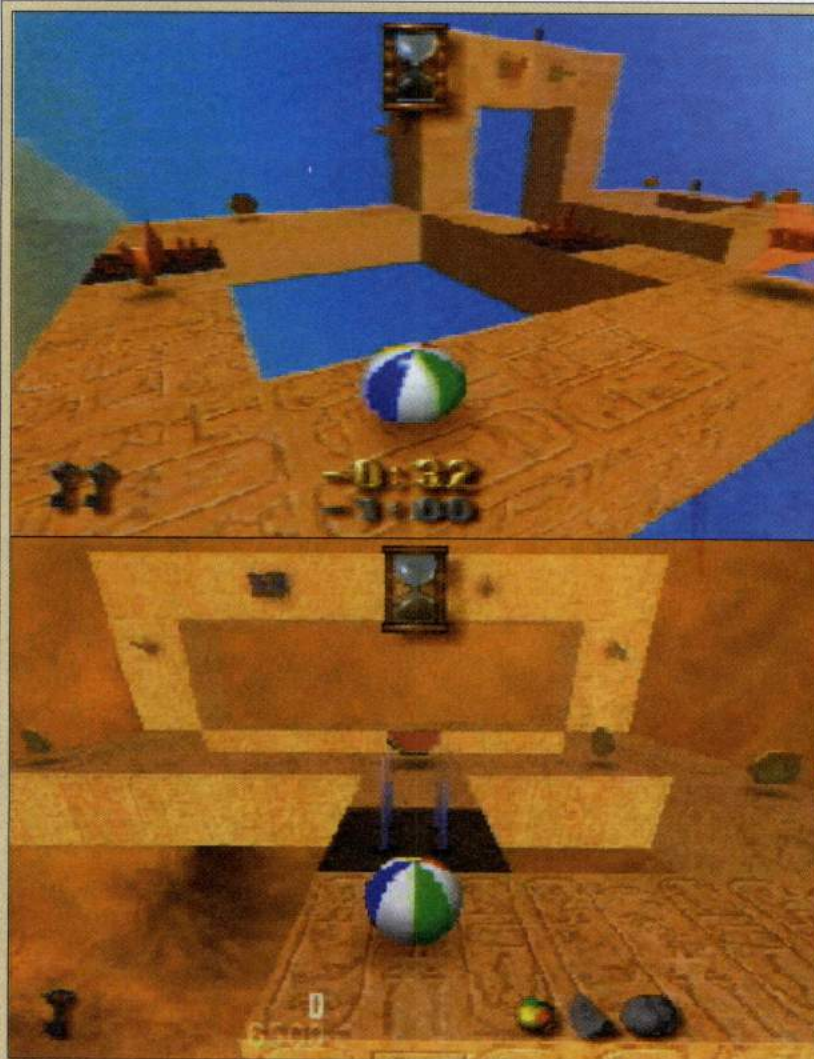
PLAYERS: 1 - 4



Long ago there was a very average racer by the name of Supersonic Racers that pretty much got ignored by everyone. Circuit Breakers is the much improved sequel to the original and it's an absolute beaut. This demo offers you a nice Arctic track for single player fun while with the help of a multi-tap you can fang around a desert track with three of your buddies. This game is so addictive and fun that we're sure you'll race out to get the full version, which if you do, you can add these stages to the list of available tracks through a special track update feature.

Controls

D-PAD - Direction
X - Accelerate
□ - Brake
△ - Change view



Kula World

BY: SONY

STYLE: PUZZLE

PLAYERS: 1 - 2

Kula World is perhaps the weirdest puzzle game that has ever been released but we guarantee that once you play this demo you'll become a Kula recruit. The action takes place on a 3D maze that hangs suspended high above the earth, where with a beachball you have to collect fruit, collect keys to open the next level and find sunglasses that reveal hidden platforms.

There's three levels on this demo, but take into account that the full version has well over one hundred levels of brain bending amusement. The best 3D puzzler on the PlayStation.

Controls

D-PAD - Movement
X - Jump
L1/R2 - Change view



Rocks and Gems

PUBLISHER: NET YAROZE

STYLE: RETRO

PLAYERS: ONE

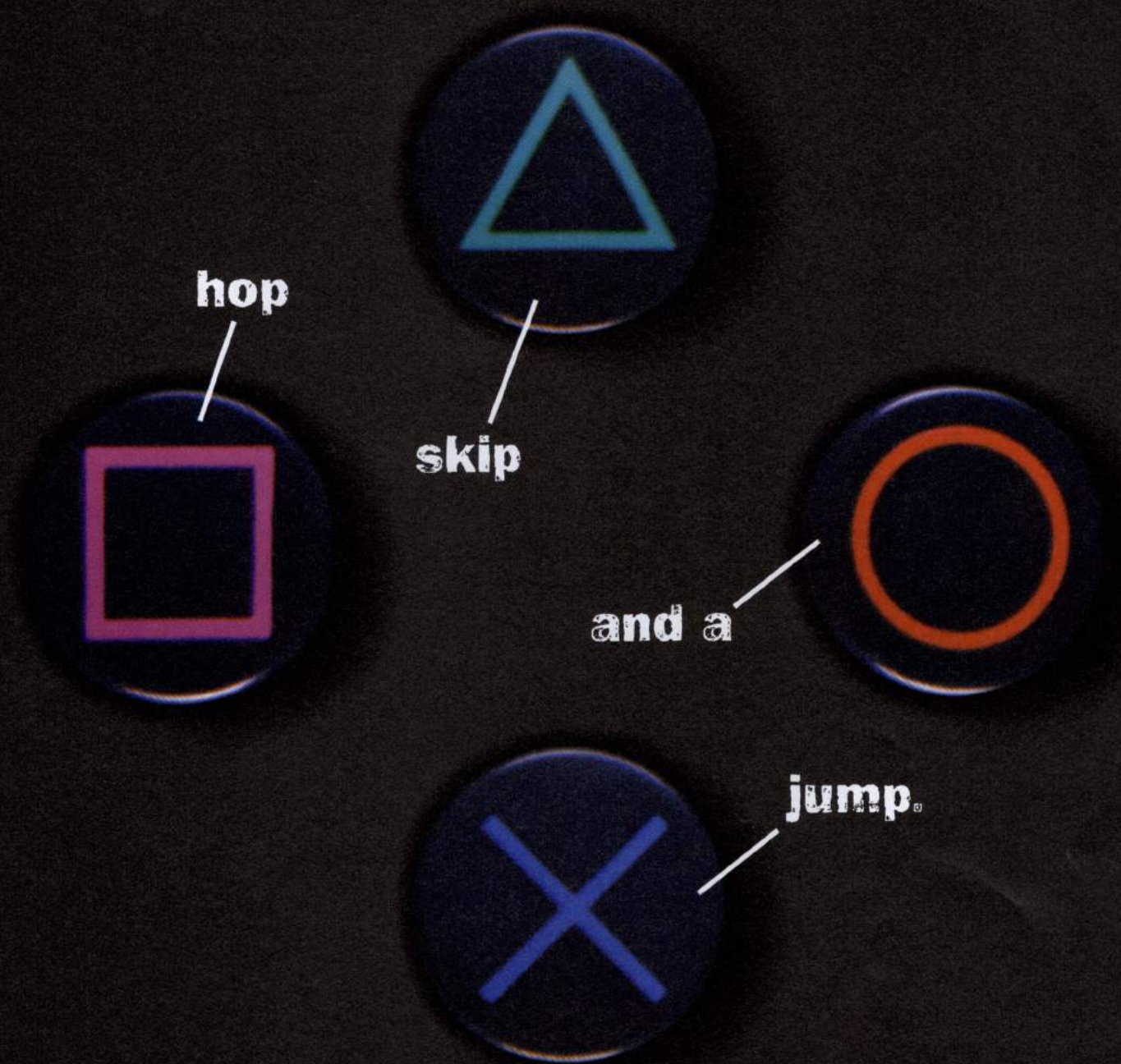
The programable PlayStation which is called the Yaroze is a great tool that can be used by anyone that wants to enter the game development industry. Only available from Sony direct, it's becoming a very popular part of the PlayStation scene.

Rocks and Gems is one of those great Yaroze games that are popping up everywhere. Unlike other Yaroze games that offer very little, this game is the full version with lots of effort put into making it addictive. The idea behind this game is simple. You're underground and have to collect gems while avoiding getting crushed by boulders that can drop on you. You can reposition the boulders to your advantage and if one drops on another then it simply rolls to the side of the lower one. Easy. Well not really as all the levels are timed, not leaving much time to admire the view. Addictive fun and a full game to boot.



Controls

D-PAD - Movement
Δ - View whole level.



You don't have to go far to find stacks of games and the latest Playstation stuff. Drop into Retravision.



500 STORES NATIONWIDE

Bomberman World

BY: HUDSONSOFT

STYLE: ACTION/PUZZLE

PLAYERS: 1 TO 5



Bomberman World is one of those games that you'll either love or hate. This demo only has one level but you can play that singly or with up to five mates, the idea behind the game is to blow up bricks and enemies to clear the stage of all obstacles.

While playing you can also pick your enemies or mates up and throw them onto bombs or out of the game. To win you have to be the last man standing. Thankfully there's a few different power ups to add to your destructive abilities, but keep an eye out as some power ups will do more harm than good.

Controls

D-PAD - Movement
O - Lay bombs/throw



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The PlayStation is the dominant videogame console in the world, but how did Sony get to this position with no prior experience in the games industry?

When Sony announced that they were going to produce a 32-bit games console in 1994 many industry insiders were sceptical to say the least. Unlike Sega or Nintendo, Sony had no track record in console design and had no in house development team that had experience with consoles or arcade games. Panasonic, the Japanese giants behind the 3DO machine were already paying the price for not having enough software support for their machine and were failing to make an impact on the games market. Wisdom dictated that old hands, Sega would wipe the floor with the young upstarts at Sony. Within three years of launch the PlayStation would be number one in the consoles market, burying the Saturn and N64 under an avalanche of quality titles. So how did Sony's new machine go from a user base of zero to worldwide sales in excess of 43 million?

Once upon a time...

Sony had already made some shrewd moves. They had signed with the top arcade developers Namco and bought a little known company called Psygnosis whose only previous claim to fame was developing the platformer *Wiz 'n' Liz* for Sega's Mega Drive. However, Sony was not as new to the games business as many thought. Under the auspices of a deal struck with Nintendo in 1990, Sony had been working on a CD based machine designed to bolt onto the Super Nintendo console. Perhaps because of the failure of Sega's Mega-CD and the lower profits to be gained compared to selling games on cartridge, Nintendo cancelled the project. Left holding the embryo of a CD console, Sony decided to press ahead and make their own stand alone console under the leadership of hardware guru Ken Kutaragi. The new machine was christened the PlayStation X, or PSX for short. Mr Kutaragi later stated "Our objective was a high performance, low priced video console system which was easy to write games for". If Sony could produce this, he knew that the software support would surely follow.

The next big thing

To create another success as big as its Walkman, Sony would have to attract

the mainstream society who previously thought video games were for kids. Their solution was to launch a massive marketing campaign that would encompass television ads and all main stream media. Celebrities were flocking to the PlayStation in their droves because the machine was suddenly the cool accessory to be associated with.

Much credit for the PlayStation's early success should go to Sony's main partners Namco and Psygnosis for producing two of the best games of the time, *Ridge Racer* and *Wipeout* respectively. *Wipeout* was especially well received in the UK, with its groovy club soundtrack featuring up and coming bands like the Chemical Brothers and LeftField helping to establish the PlayStation's superior street credentials. Everywhere that *Ridge Racer* was viewed by the public it impressed beyond belief with graphics and soundtrack that hadn't been seen in any driving game outside of a dedicated arcade machine.

In September 1995 Sony masterminded the most successful launch in videogame history, selling 100,000 consoles to American consumers in the first weekend on sale. Sony would need more than slick marketing, they would need games that captured peoples imaginations. Once again Psygnosis and Namco delivered the goods with their respective releases of *Destruction Derby* and *Tekken*. Both games were destined to become best sellers, but much more importantly they wowed consumers and players with their cutting edge graphics and sound.

Along with *Wipeout*, these titles proved to everyone that the PlayStation should be taken very seriously. Perhaps more than any other game *Tekken* showed the PlayStation's massive potential. While not as 3D as the earlier *Battle Arena Toshinden*, *Tekken's*

superbly rendered fighters, amazing introduction and stunning sound made Sega's *Virtua Fighter* look like something out of a Lego box. Yet all this was merely a taste of what was to come.

All systems go

The PlayStation really took off in 1996. After selling 750,000 PAL units over Christmas 1995, Sony never let the momentum slip. Not only did they keep up their marketing campaign, but in May they also dramatically dropped the price of the PlayStation. This went some way to explain why Squaresoft, one of Nintendo's most important third party developers had defected to Sony the month before, announcing that their forthcoming *Final Fantasy VII* would now appear on Sony's super console rather than the N64. Squaresoft, like many other developers, could see

that the main console to support would be the super console, the PlayStation. This gaming David quickly turned into a Goliath with triple A titles like *Die Hard Trilogy*, *Formula 1* and *Wipeout 2097* to boost it with. It was no real surprise then that by Christmas 1996 the PlayStation was installed in nearly four and a half million homes worldwide.

After snatching the bulk of the CD console market out from under Sega's nose and not even letting the arrival of the Nintendo 64 put a dent in their figures, Sony was determined that no one would catch them. To reinforce their dominance they slashed the price of the PlayStation even further and at the same time introducing their budget Platinum range at an astounding \$39.95, ensuring that the price of fun was never cheaper or more enticing. Nintendo's profit related decision

PlayStationTM

HISTORY



Sony HQ, Tokyo



Above: *Wipeout 2097* and *Tekken 2*.

to avoid publishing games on CD would come back to haunt them as with the higher manufacturing costs of cartridge games, they were unable to follow Sony's lead of offering cheap quality games for gamers to play.

Do not underestimate...

Now at the beginning of 1999, Sony is still the clear leader in the videogame market. Sega is attempting a comeback with its Dreamcast, although the company's track record for following up with full support is in question following their dismal effort with the Saturn. PlayStation owners, however, needn't be tempted by the Dark Side, for Sony has no intention of losing its No.1 position in the market. The PlayStation 2 is well in development and is expected to be launched in Japan by the end of the year and to follow in other territories shortly after. With a DVD drive a distinct possibility, the PSX2 will blow all competition clear out of the arena when it does arrive.

Of course, this doesn't mean that the current PlayStation won't keep powering along, with more titles due to be released this year than any other. There are now over 43 million PlayStation sitting in front of TVs around the world, 1 million of which belong in Australian and New Zealand homes. With these sort of figures, you've got to take notice of Sony's marketing line: Do not underestimate the power of PlayStation.

WHAT'S HOT. Coming to a PlayStation near you in 1999 are more games than ever before. Here's a look at the games that will be making a big splash this year.

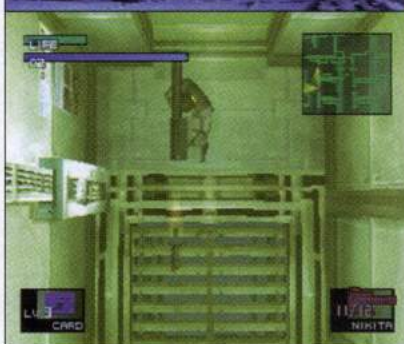
BY: KONAMI

RELEASE: MARCH 1999

Metal Gear Solid

Subtitled 'Tactical Espionage Action', Metal Gear Solid is just that. Play the role Solid Snake as he gets to the heart of an international conspiracy, using stealth to sneak past guards and security cameras until he finds enough firepower to start taking action. The gameplay is unprecedented, requiring attention, patience and careful planning all the way. You'll have to press your body up against many a wall to fulfil your orders without being noticed, that's how realistic this game gets!

The deep conspiratorial plot will pull you in, with the two discs providing plenty of storyline presented in cinematic sequences that punctuate the game. You must use all your items to your best advantage. Grenades, mines, detonators, cardboard boxes (to hide from guards in), thermal goggles, missiles, telescope, and guns, guns, guns. You won't just play this game, you'll live it.



Metal Gear Solid promises to offer a true action adventure title for the PlayStation on the lines of Nintendo's Goldeneye.

PlayStation

1999 PREVIEWS



Metal Gear Solid comprises many different gameplay functions, everything from out and out shooting to stealth like tactics. A good mix of styles will ensure success.

BY: SQUARE

RELEASE: SEPTEMBER 1999

Final Fantasy VIII

The world's most popular role playing game series makes a return to the PlayStation in its eighth guise. From what we've seen of the graphics, they look even more stunning than in FFVII, with the game having a very English look to it. Gone are the techno scenes from the last FF, with number eight being set in more Victorian times around Europe.

Following in the tradition that is Final Fantasy, all the characters that were in the last game are gone with

a new cast being used for FFVIII. The beauty of this is that the series doesn't become a boring and re-hashed storyline, with each new game coming new life to the world of Final Fantasy.

When FFVII was released, it caused panic buying in Japan where thousands of people lined up for days to get a copy, it's our opinion that they should start lining up now because Final Fantasy VIII looks like it's going to be even more popular.



After the phenomenal success of Final Fantasy VII, the eighth installment is perhaps the most eagerly awaited sequel in gaming history. From what we've seen, it looks beautiful.

PlayStation

1999 PREVIEWS



BY: NAMCO

RELEASE: JUNE 1999

Point Blank 2

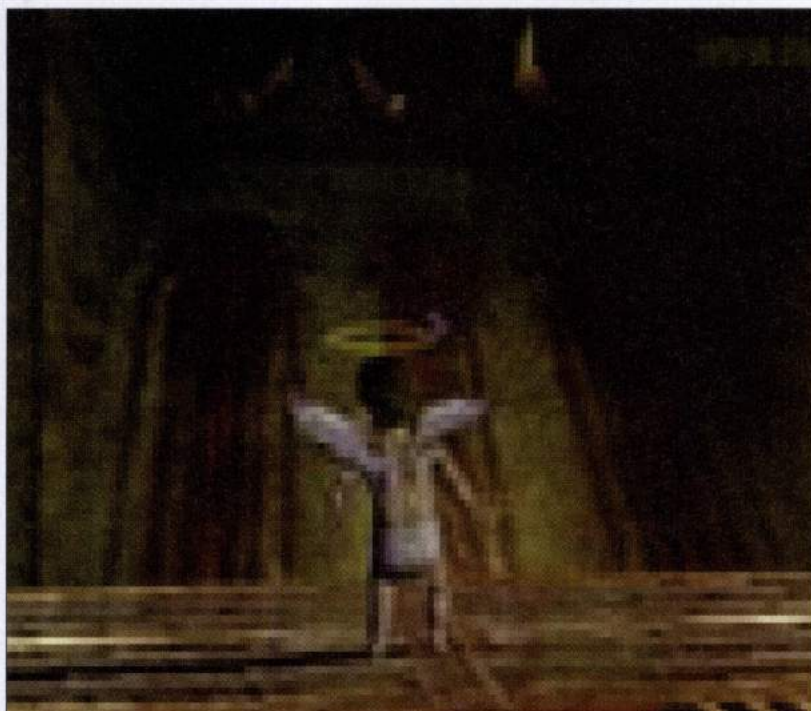
Making a second appearance in 1999 will be Point Blank 2. This the sequel to Point Blank looks to be offering even more arcade shooting mayhem that the world loved in the original. While the game has had some minor improvements over the first, the single and two player arcade modes are pretty much the same.

Many of the stages are slightly different to the first game and use similar

elements, but there are some stages that are completely new. Examples of the new wacky stages to expect include a level where you have to shoot the fleece off sheep, another where you have to blow up a giant bulldozer, and one where you have to stop aliens from abducting Dr Don and Dr Dan. The challenge stages are a lot tougher than before, with faster targets and more of them.



Perhaps the wackiest shooting game to ever see the light of day, Point Blank was received extremely well by the gaming public and number two should do likewise.



BY: SHINY

RELEASE: TBA

Messiah

Messiah is the newest technological breakthrough from Shiny Entertainment, the creators of Earthworm Jim and MDK. Players control Bob, a chubby little cherub with a big, dirty job to do: cleanse the Earth of its vile sinners. Armed with nothing but the unusual gift of possession, Bob is able to slip into the bodies of Earth's inhabitants, using their weapons and physical strengths to complete his mission.

A combination of revolutionary graphics, unlimited gameplay and a twisted sense of humour means that Messiah is another quality game that we can expect to see in 1999.

Play as Bob, the Cherub, to possess and control over 20 different characters for unpredictable results. Decapitate and kill your enemies, or simply wound them and watch them try to crawl to safety. Use assault rifles, concussion grenades, and rocket propelled harpoons to down the sinners. State of the art 3D graphics provide unprecedented realism. Each 3D model has approximately 500 times more polygons than Quake II or Tomb Raider 2, and far exceeds any PlayStation game.



PlayStation

1999 PREVIEWS

BY: SONY

RELEASE: 3RD QUARTER '99

Gran Turismo 2

The most popular driving game on the PlayStation is heading back later this year for another round of high speed racing in the latest model sports cars. For the sequel Sony are promising even more cars, including many European and American models not found in the first game, including such prestigious mar-

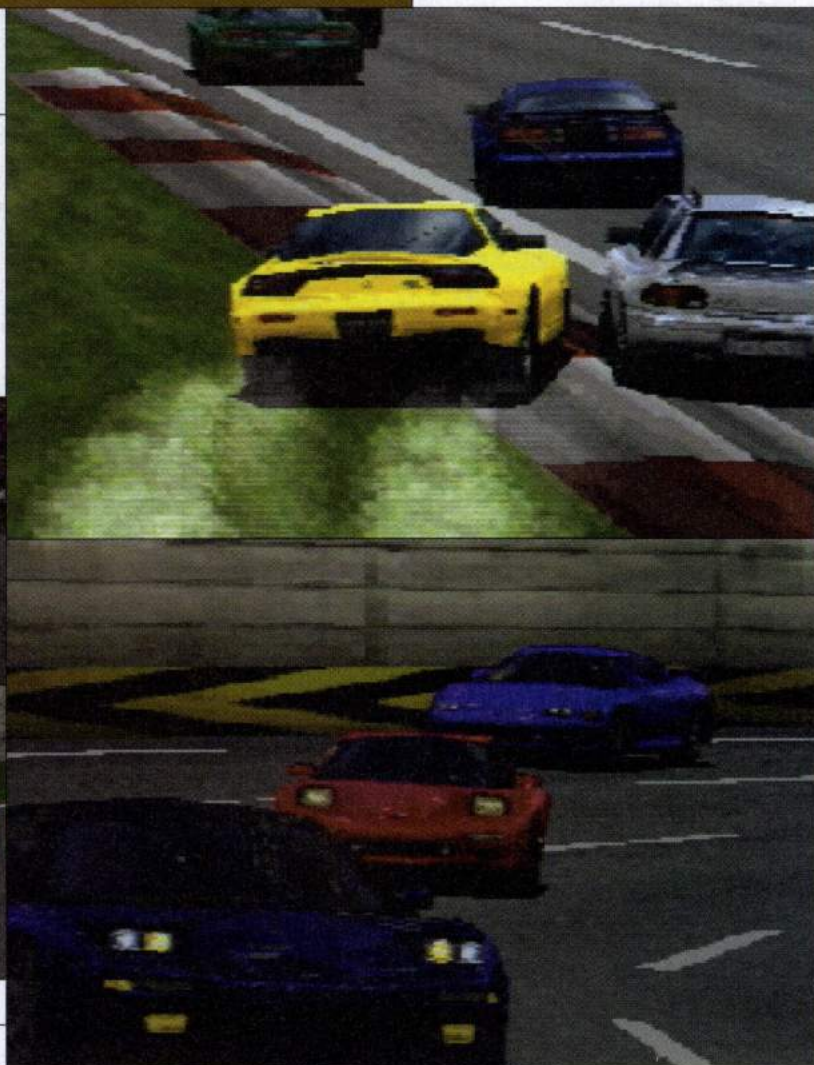
ques as Ferrari.

Other new features touted for the sequel include actual damage to cars which will affect handling, as well as off-road racing rally style.

Details are still scarce at this early stage, although Sony is hoping to release the game exactly one year after the first game's release.



Don't get excited. These are actually shots from GT 1. The second installment is shrouded in secrecy, that's why we don't have any pictures yet.





BY: SHINY

RELEASE: FEBRUARY

RC Stunt Copter



This unusual flight sim puts the player behind the controls of, not a military helicopter bristling with guns and missiles, but a humble remote controlled helicopter. The gameplay is 100% faithful to the real thing, allowing a number of very impressive loops, barrel rolls, and heaps of other stunts.

In addition to realistic flight physics, the game is expected to include variable wind and weather conditions. It is said that the game's analog control will be so accurate, anyone reasonably proficient at the game would have no problem flying a real remote control helicopter.

With various models of helicopter available, you can decide which one suits your abilities best. There's also a lot of different courses to test out varying abilities so it's important to be able to land, take off, fly straight and to do stunts. This is the flying game you've been waiting for on the PlayStation, and it'll be hovering into your airspace soon.



PlayStation

1999 PREVIEWS

BY: NAMCO

RELEASE: 2ND QUARTER '99

Ridge Racer Type 4

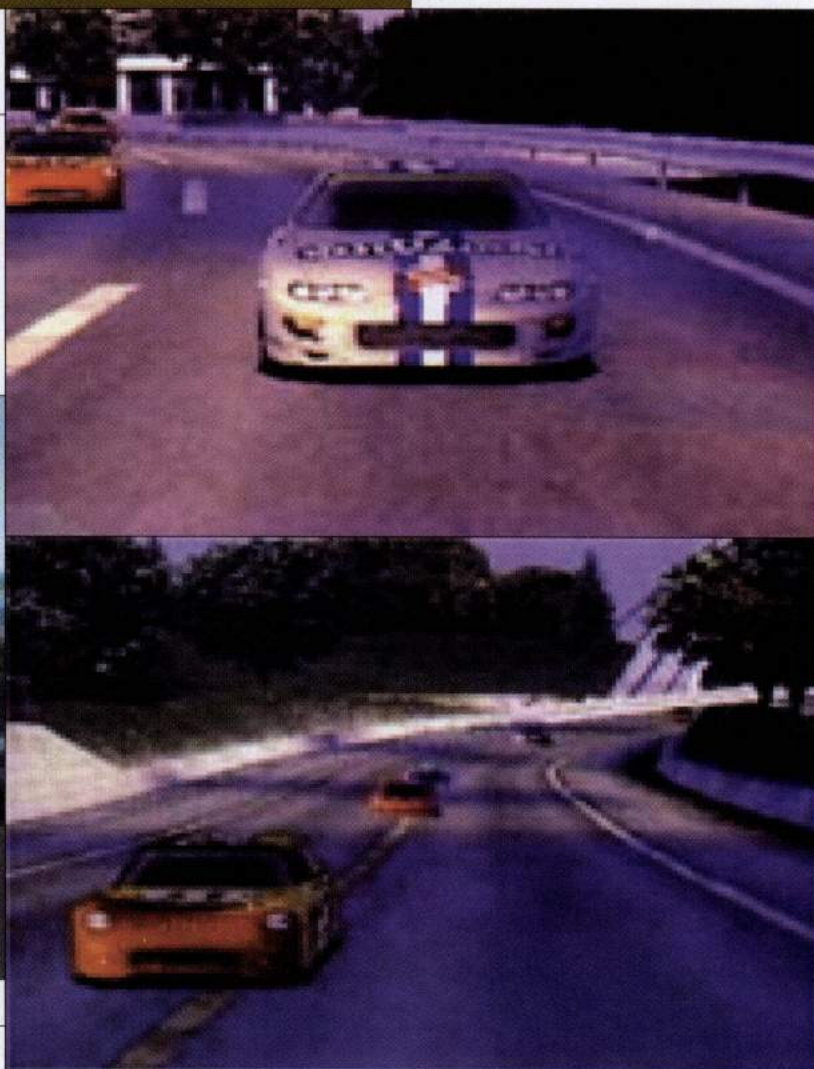
Ridge Racer was the first PlayStation conversion of an arcade driving game and now it's returning in 1999 with a totally revamped look. Forget the bright garish colours of the original, Ridge Racer Type 4 (or R4 as it's known) has gone for the realistic look, similar to Gran Turismo.

Early reports indicate that R4 could

indeed be the game to knock GT of its pedestal of best PlayStation driving game, and is being released simultaneously with Namco's new Jogcon analog controller, which promises to offer real force feedback in its steering wheel. This means the controls will actually fight against you in time with the G-forces of speeding around a corner at 180kph.



This game is going to rock! Over 300 cars and lush graphics make RR Type 4 the must have racer for 1999. Keep an eye out for this one.



BY: TBA

RELEASE: MARCH

Tomorrow Never Dies

The British Empire's most loved spy, James Bond, is finally making an appearance on the PlayStation in early to mid 1999. The game is being touted as better than GoldenEye and by the looks of what we've seen, it's going to be one hot title for 1999.

Tomorrow Never Dies the game is a continuation of the movie, picking up where Pierce Brosnan and Michelle Yeoh left off. The game isn't a case of follow the movie and win. The game-

play is said to be fairly difficult with some grey matter needed to succeed.

While the simple hide, shoot, and attack combat levels are still there,

James Bond doesn't just carry firearms anymore. You'll be able to ski, swim, drive, and fly across the levels, which are inspired by some of the best Bond films out there, like Thunderball and The Spy Who Loved Me. You'll relive things like the ski chase from the opening of The Spy Who Loved Me, or drive the BMW Z3 across Germany.



Yeah! Our first James Bond game! It looks excellent and plays awesomely.

PlayStation

1999 PREVIEWS



Quake 2 was pooh-pooed by the geeky computer community but we reckon this is going to be one awesome first person shooter for the PlayStation.



BY: ACTIVISION

RELEASE: FEBRUARY 1999

Quake II

Quake II is being converted from PC to the PlayStation by Activision and is one of the most anticipated games of the year. Having been a huge success in the PC gaming world, Quake II has taken so long to arrive on the PlayStation because the developers want it to be perfect.

Quake II on the PlayStation looks absolutely stunning, with the envi-

ronments being some of the best that we've seen in any first person shooter. A number of changes have had to be made for technical reasons, in fact this new version has been rewritten from scratch, but it will retain the full flavour of it's awesome forbearer. Activision has also hinted that there's going to be even more exclusive features that we PlayStation owners will enjoy.



There's more to the PlayStation than just the games. A range of peripherals and accessories exists to help you get the most enjoyment out of the games you play. From arcade-style joysticks, to memory cards, to 5-player adaptors, there's bound to be something you need here.

PlayStation

PERIPHERALS

BY: SONY

RRP: \$39.95

PlayStation Controller

A good design will stand the test of time, and Sony's original PlayStation controller is testament to that. Its simple, yet stylish design, and no-nonsense functionality make this the joypad we return to after all the others have self destructed or otherwise disintegrated through the

rigours of constant use in the PlayStation Magazine games room.

If you need a second pad (or third or forth if you plan on making use of a Multitap), then this is the one to go for. As well as the standard issue grey, the controllers are also available in a range of colours and transparent casings.



BY: SONY

RRP: \$49.95

PlayStation Mouse

The PlayStation mouse is one peripheral that you will either use a lot or not at all, depending on the games you play. Strategy games such as Red Alert, Discworld 2 and Broken Sword 2 are what the this mouse was designed for. Final Doom, however, also supports the mouse,

which is used for turning and aiming with your right hand while you hold the joypad in your left, using the direction pad to move forward and strafe.

The mouse itself is a very well made piece of equipment but whether or not it's for you comes down to what particular games you like to play.

BY: SONY

RRP: \$39.95

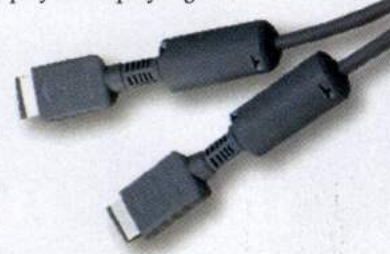
PlayStation link Cable

The link cable is one of the most under-utilised accessories for the PlayStation. The idea of the link cable is a very good one, with one link cable you can join up two PlayStations (and two TV sets) to battle head to head against a friend or cooperatively, depending on the game.

Games which make the most of this option include Wipeout 2097, Destruction Derby (the first game), Doom, TOCA 2 and Formula 1 98, to name but a few.

In principle the link up idea is great, but with lack of developer support

and the need to have two of everything in the same room tends to make it too bothersome to worry about, but those who do make the effort will be richly rewarded by the best way to play multi-player games.



BY: NAMCO

RRP: \$59.95

Namco NegCon



early PlayStation releases, and most new racing games still support it.

The NegCon controller has been split down the centre so you can twist either side of the controller for progressive analog steering. Working on a simple principle, if you want to turn to the right all you do is turn the right side clockwise and if you want to turn left you turn the left side clockwise. It also has two analog buttons, perfect for smooth acceleration and braking.

The shape of the NegCon may take a while to get used to, but in some situations it is more stable and precise than the Dual Shock controller. A rather specialised pad, the NegCon isn't for everyone, but those who use it regularly swear by it.

The NegCon was the first analog controller available for the PlayStation, but has taken a back seat to the Dual Shock once it was released. It's still a good pad because you can use it on many of the

BY: SONY

RRP: \$39.95

Memory Cards

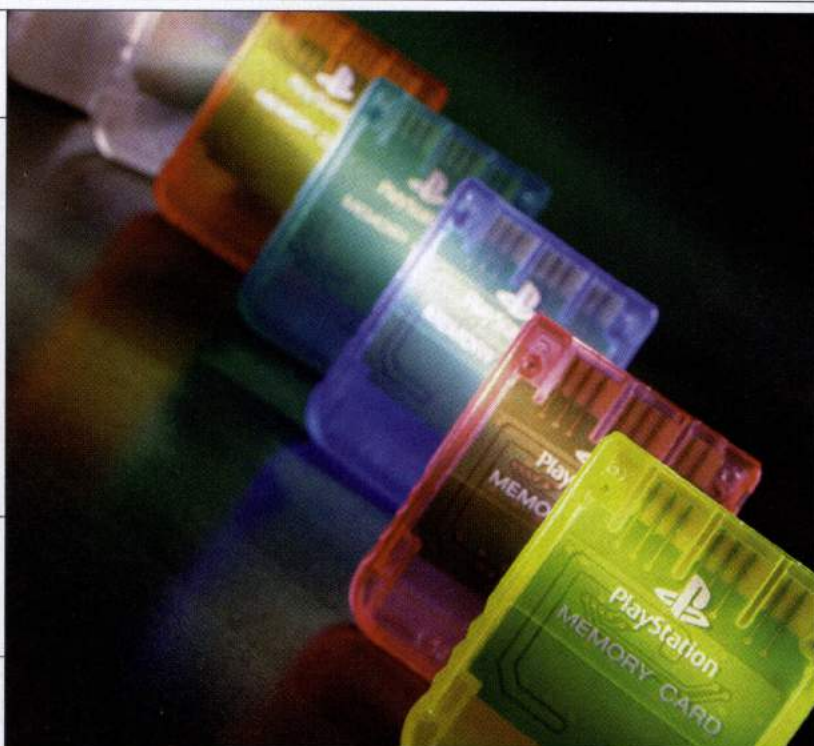
The memory card is an essential peripheral for your PlayStation.

Just about every game requires a memory card to save your progress, be it your current stage or new weapons or cars that you've unlocked. This replaces all those old annoying passwords that you had to scribble down somewhere in days gone by.

Each of the Sony memory cards comes with fifteen free blocks of memory, with most games only requiring one slot that you continu-

ally save over. There are exceptions to this rule and the excellent Gran Turismo is one of them, for it requires a minimum of five free blocks, with more being used if you want to save replays.

If you've got a large library of games then you may need more than one memory card and may be tempted to purchase an 8-in-1 card, but only official Sony memory cards will reliably keep your precious game data safe and secure.



BY: NAMCO

AVAILABLE: 2ND QTR '99

Namco JogCon

The JogCon is a new controller made by Namco specifically for Ridge Racer Type 4, due to be released locally towards the middle of the year. It sports a small analog steering wheel located in its centre which

will feature active force feedback, meaning that the wheel will turn against you in relation to your car's movement and momentum. How this will work out in the finished product remains to be seen, but early indications are positive and the idea of a

force feedback controller for the PlayStation is highly appealing.



PlayStation

PERIPHERALS

Dual Shock Controller

BY: SONY

RRP: \$59.95



The Dual Shock looks just like a standard pad with two main differences. The most obvious is the two thumb pads that sit under the start and select buttons in the middle of the pad. These support analog control and are especially suited for driving games where they give excellent response for precision steering, acceleration and braking. Many other game also utilise the analog control for other gameplay functions.

The other difference with the Dual Shock is the fact that it vibrates to give an extra dimension to games. In driving games this happens when you hit a curb or go off the track, and actions games will give you a jolt when you fire weapons or get hit. Although this doesn't affect the way you play the game, it is a nice feature and can work well to enhance the experience, especially when developers effectively combine the high and low range vibrations (Gran Turismo does so superbly).

This is the mutt's nuts as far as joy-pads go, and once you've used one you won't want to go back to the standard pad.

BY: SONY

RRP: \$49.95

Multitap 4 player adaptor

If you like to play games against your friends, then you know that the more the better when it comes party entertainment. The Multitap looks like a grey boomerang with a lead coming from it that plugs into the second PlayStation controller ports. Once connected, you can then put up to four different controllers into the slots provided, making for a total of five players, and there's also a memory card slot above each controller port.

With the multitap you can play against or with up to four of your friends in multiplayer games like

Bomberman World and Circuit Breakers. You can even run two Multitaps out of the same PlayStation for 8-player action in some sport games like soccer and basketball.



PlayStation

PERIPHERALS

BY: NAMCO

RRP: \$99.95

Namco Arcade Stick

Namco's Arcade Stick stands out by being simple in both design and function, resulting in a no-nonsense joystick similar in style to those found on arcade machines. It consists of a solid 8-way joystick and six big buttons, with small L2, R2, Start and Select buttons up the top. The buttons themselves are big and responsive, and the base of the stick is quite solid, though you'll still want a firm flat sur-

face to rest it on when playing.

This joystick is obviously designed for fighting games and that's what it's best used for, especially with Namco's own titles like Tekken 3 and Soul Blade. If you want an arcade joystick, this is the one to get.



BY: SONY

AVAILABLE: 3RD QTR '99

PocketStation



Sony's forthcoming new toy for the PlayStation will allow gamers to play their favourite games away from their grey box. Slightly larger than a memory card, and connecting to the PlayStation via the same port, the PocketStation features a LCD screen and can download game data from the PlayStation, allowing for gaming on the run. It also features an infrared transmitter to communicate with

other PocketStations. It also has an built in clock and calender and filing system so it can function as a personal digital.

A new generation of PlayStation games are in development to complement the PocketStation, and it will be these software that can be stored for portable gaming. Titles announced so far include Crash Bandicoot 3, Final Fantasy VIII, Street Fighter Zero 3 and more.

BY: NAMCO

RRP: \$59.95

Namco G-Con.45



The G-Con is Namco's official gun for its conversions of arcade games Time Crisis and Point Blank. It has an extra connection to the video out for superior shooting accuracy, but this means it is not compatible with other, older light gun games not published by Namco. Fortunately, Namco's two games mentioned are by far the best shooters anyway, so this is the only gun you should need.

The G-Con is lightweight and comfortable to hold, the trigger action sharp and responsive and the accuracy is second to none. There really isn't anything to fault with this gun, other than the lack of software currently available.

The programmable PlayStation:

So, you want to make your own PlayStation game? All you need is a Yaroze and a bit of talent

Back in the 80s, game programming was enjoyed by many bedroom programmers as the machines they used allowed for simple operation when it came to making your own games. All you had to do was enter in several thousand command lines and voila! You had a game that was made by a relative amateur. That all went the way of the dinosaurs when the consoles took over and computers became more complicated.

Enter the Net Yaroze. A couple of years after the PlayStation was released, Sony made the clever move of offering the Net Yaroze to up and coming programmers that wanted to develop games, but lacked the sophisticated hardware or financial backing of a publisher.

What it is

The Net Yaroze is a black programmable PlayStation that comes with two controllers, the software needed to design the games, and all the necessary connection and programming manuals, plus you also get continued help through the official Net Yaroze members web site.

In order to get the full potential out

of the Yaroze it is fairly important that you have a basic knowledge of the programming code C. However, if you're brimming with enthusiasm you could learn the code when you get your Yaroze. You'll also need a PC or Mac to process all of the code. The games that can be produced with Yaroze aren't to the standards of Tekken or Tomb Raider, but with a bit of creativity, a programmer could produce a demo of a simple side scrolling game within a matter of weeks. As an example of what can be achieved in a relatively short period of time have a look at the game Rocks and Gems on our demo CD. Sure the graphics look like they've stepped out of an 8-bit console, but it's in the ideas of the gameplay that makes this particular demo an enjoyable game.

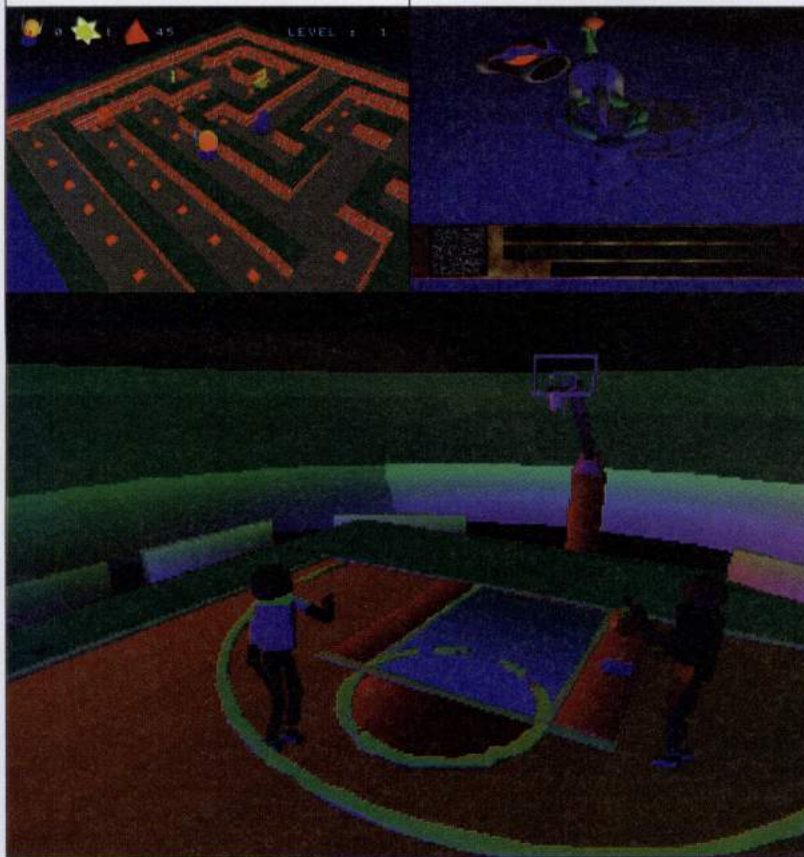
Your Ideas

Alright, so you want to buy a Net Yaroze and start programming but you want to know what kind of assistance is out there if you come across a problem? As mentioned, Sony has set up a worldwide internet site where you can go chat with other Yaroze members and swap ideas or talk about problems



PlayStation

NET YAROZE



Above: a selection of Net Yaroze games available for the PlayStation.

in a chat room. As well as that, there's also a team of programming and PlayStation experts that can help you out with any technical or development problems. Sony can offer advice and help for as long as you have your Yaroze, which is a great incentive for people that want to have a go but are too worried about technical problems.

The beauty of the Net Yaroze is that it's fully supported by Sony. Not only will they test out your games and give you constructive suggestions, but imagine being offered the chance of fully developing your game idea. The clever thing that Sony have done is to give so called "bedroom programmers" the opportunity to develop their game ideas on the PlayStation.

One of the ideas behind the Yaroze is that by getting it into the hands of the gamers themselves means that there's going to be plenty of new talent and great ideas coming from a wide spectrum of the world community. It promotes game development at the game players level, basically using the Net Yaroze as a bank for great game ideas. Sony get the first pick of the fresh talent out there, while amateur developers get their foot in the

door of the world of professional games development.

Sign me up!

The net Yaroze is available only through Sony Computer Entertainment, so if you're interested in knowing more about the Yaroze and how to become a Net Yaroze member, visit the official Net Yaroze internet site and request the information be sent to you. The Net Yaroze PlayStation and all the necessary equipment comes in around the thousand dollar mark, but that's peanuts compared to a high end computer and all the software used by professional development companies.

All up, it's a very tempting product. Not only do you get the chance to show the world what you're made of, you also get to play your own games whenever you want, and you get to impress the hell out of your friends with your cool black programmable PlayStation! So if you've been wanting to break into the games development market and have a thousand ideas in your head, then this is for you.

Net yaroze web site:

www.scee.sony.co.uk/yarinfo/index.html

DEATH WAR

BEAST

PRAISE THE LORD & PASS THE AMMUNITION.



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DESTROY IT ALL

EXPLORE MULTI-LEVEL WAR FACTORIES, PRISONS, SEWERS AND MORE. LEVEL EVERYTHING TO THE GROUND IN 360° BATTLE-ANYWHERE ENVIRONMENTS THAT ECHO WITH EXPLOSIVE SOUND EFFECTS.



LOCK AND LOAD

BRAVE THE DISMAL FUTURE AGAINST UP TO EIGHT ENEMIES ON-SCREEN AT A TIME. GOOD THING YOU CAN DON MULTIPLE WEAPONS AT ONCE LIKE FLAME THROWERS, SEMI-AUTOMATICS AND HOMING MISSILES.

THE END OF THE WORLD IS NEAR.
YOU'RE BRUCE WILLIS, STARRING AS
TREY KINCAID, NANO-PHYSICIST AND SOLE
DEFENDER OF THE WORLD. IT'S UP TO YOU
TO DEFEAT THE FOUR HORSEMEN BEFORE
IT'S HAPPY TRAILS TO US ALL...

BRING IT ON.

FEATURING FEI/ATLANTIC RECORDING ARTIST POE AS PLAGUE.

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STARRING BRUCE WILLIS.

THE END BEGINS THIS NOVEMBER.

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Racing Games

Driving and racing games are one of the most popular styles of game on the PlayStation and are represented by a number of excellent titles. Gran Turismo has been described as the best driving game ever by many, however Codemasters' TOCA 2 and Colin McRae Rally aren't far behind.



30 GRAN TURISMO



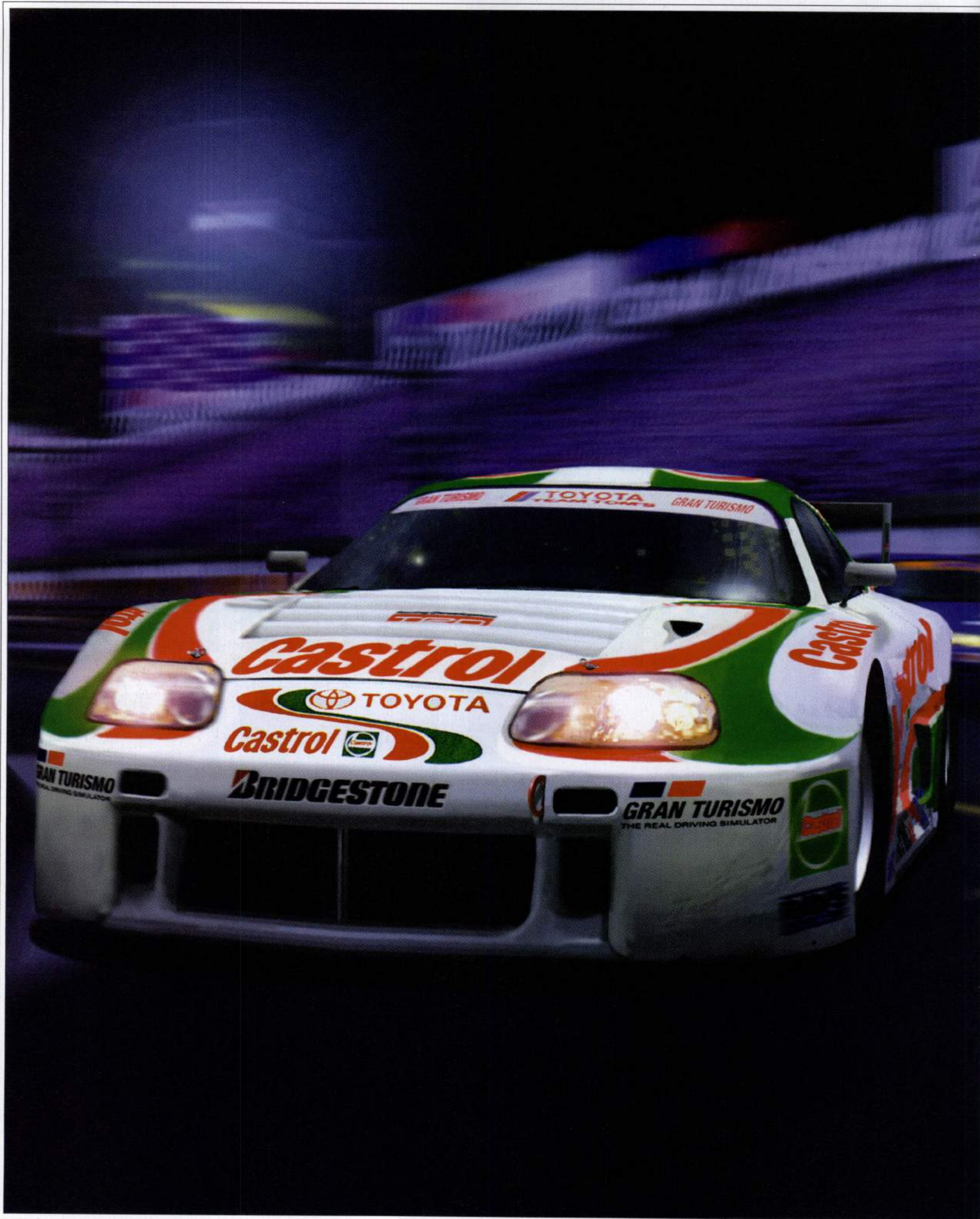
34 COLIN MCRAC RALLY



36 TOCA 2



38 MOTO RACER 2



Gran Turismo

This is it. The ultimate driving experience. When it comes to car games, you won't get any closer to the real thing than this one

Well this is it, Sony's 'secret' racing game. The one that surprised the hell out of everyone a few months before Christmas when the Japanese version suddenly appeared from nowhere. Slicker than racing tires, more powerful than a fully tuned V10, and even more fun than a back seat full of cheerleaders, Gran Turismo is one of those games that define a genre, a game that takes Nintendo's pathetic attempts at racing titles and grinds them into the muck they so richly deserve to wallow in. This is the best racing game I have ever played on any home system past or present - PSX, N64, Saturn, PC, 3Dfx (and by golly I own them all) and Sony Japan now certainly deserve the right to see themselves up there with the best game developers in the world.

PlayStation owners are a lucky lot. We've only just gotten over the excitement of Codemaster's great TOCA Touring Cars to be hit with this, a title that dwarfs TOCA in every possible way! I really am stumped as to where to begin here, so let's go down the obvious path and talk gameplay first. Gran Turismo works almost like two games in one with totally separate 'Arcade' and 'Gran Turismo' modes each with their own secrets and setup options. The Arcade mode is the one most people will jump straight into, so let's do the same!

Arcade Antics

GT's Arcade mode is a pretty standard setup starting with four tracks and several car manufacturers to choose machines from. The cars are divided between their various manufacturers and also into three classes depending on their weight and power. There is a choice of three difficulty levels as well. This is a good place to get a bit of practice for the 'real' racing that comes in Gran Turismo mode, and it is also the only place where you can race with two players on the track, as the GT mode is single player only. There are four 'hidden' tracks in Arcade mode, as well as four manufacturers and a secret 'high-res' mode all of which are unlocked in different ways. To get the new tracks you have to win on the initial ones with a car from each of the three classes (ie. win a race on the same track with an A, B and C class car). If you then win on the unlocked track with a car from each class, you unlock a new manufacturer. To get the 'High-Res' mode (which gives high res polygons on three tracks only) you have to completely beat Arcade mode, winning on every track, in every class on the hardest difficulty setting, which with un-tuned cars is damn hard! The depth and quality of this game is so good I can honestly say that even if Sony had left the development here, with just this arcade mode, GT would have still been the best racer ever on the PSX. But wait, there's

more! The Arcade mode is only the proverbial tip of the iceberg, and it is in Gran Turismo mode that the true magnificence of this game is unleashed.

Who's Granny Turismo?

It isn't your long lost Italian grandmother, rather Gran Turismo is the campaign or serious side of Sony's new racer and is where most of the innovation and gritty good stuff resides. GT mode presents you with a map on screen, with a selection of manufacturers (all of them this time), a race menu, test track, the entry point for your license exams (see boxout) and even a car wash! You start here with a small amount of money and a lot of potential. Once a license is acquired, your first task is to select the best car for your present budget and then set about winning some prize money to build it up with. At first you will only be able to afford a second hand car but a careful perusal of everything on offer will reward you with several likely candidates. Indeed, some of the second-hand vehicles can be tuned up to an awesome state, like the 980 horsepower '95 Supra RZ. Gran Turismo mode is set up as a progressive test of your skills, giving you access to more championships, tracks and cars as you get better and your car setups get more accurate. The best cars in the game must be won by winning championships, which are accessed with one of the three licenses. Naturally you are granted bigger and bigger prize purses as the championships get more difficult, and you can use this to reinvest in your car to improve its performance, or to buy a new one. You will not be able to win every championship with the same car, which is another good thing about this game.

Feel the speed!

You may already be sold on this game, but I haven't even mentioned the awesome handling characteristics yet! Unlike virtually any other racing game I have played, GT actually gives you the feel of your car as it moves along the bitumen, rather than just seeming to be flying through the air. When your car slides around a corner, it doesn't just glide around in a circle like a hockey puck. It bounces, like a real car, hundreds of little tiny bounces. The changes that your car setup makes to its handling can be quite dramatic, and if you want to spend some time fooling around you can build yourself one fine racing machine.

Gran Turismo is an amazing achievement on many levels, pushing both gameplay and graphics to heights never before reached on the PSX. Put GT side by side with Ridge Racer, one of the PlayStation's first racing titles, and there is no way you would believe they were running on the same machine! With the release of this game Sony has redrawn the boundaries that define excellence on the PlayStation and instantly rendered every other racing title on the system

BY: SONY

PRICE: \$79.95

PLAYERS: ONE or TWO

ACCESSORIES: MEMORY CARD

DUAL SHOCK

CLASSIFICATION: G



The replays are one of the best features.

redundant. It really is that good. People will be playing and talking about Gran Turismo long after most other PSX titles have been forgotten, and that is the ultimate test of a great game.

What's under the bonnet?

To tune your car's engine and components you must drop into the special auto shop section within each manufacturer's menu. Here you will find a massive array of race parts to improve the performance of your machine. This is one of the really amazing things about GT, these parts aren't just gimmicks. Even though there are masses of them, each and every adjustment is noticeable and putting the right parts on your car for the right track is an integral part of the game's strategy element. And it's not just a matter of putting the most expensive bit on because that's the best one, oh no. Putting a stage four turbo on a Supra racing on a track with many twists and turns for example is hilarious. The stage four turbo provides around a 150% power boost and completely sucks the torque right out of the engine (ie. absolutely no power at low revs). Your car will be left at the starting line, desperately trying to get up enough revs to drive the turbo and then when it finally kicks in it feels as though it's going to tear the rear axle right off the car making it virtually un-driveable, you can smoke your tires in sixth gear with that baby! Conversely, correctly setting up a little CRX LM edition with the correct ride height, spring rate, gear ratios and stabilisers for the same track will get you around it in half the time, even though the CRX only has a third of the power. There are something like 164 cars in GT, and each is unique with different performance potentials and handling. Even the engine noises are different, and the



With 298 beautiful cars to choose from, it's like walking through the biggest caryard ever

scream turbos sound sick! The depth to this game is simply phenomenal.

May I see your License, Sir?

The License tests are the heart of Gran Turismo, and can also be damn infuriating! There are three of them and they must be completed sequentially, first the B license then the A license and finally the International license. Without a license you only have access to single races and no championships, so getting one is a high priority if you want to get into the action. Essentially the tests are designed to hone your skills in various aspects of driving: handling hairpin turns at high speed, chicanes etc., and to allow access to the championships for each license category. The interesting thing is that the championships broaden as you gain higher licenses and require different cars with different setups. For example with your second license you can enter

a championship which has a huge oval track designed for max speed (that's where you use the stage four turbo!), or one that only allows entry by 4WD vehicles. With the third and final International A class license you can enter races which are 60 laps long and require pit stops to change tires! The licenses, however, are also highly challenging to obtain. Not so much the first two, but the tests for the final license are simply torture and require many attempts at shaving a few more precious seconds off the lap times.

Any Flat tires?

We all know that even the best games have flaws and imperfections, but what could possibly be bad about Gran Turismo? Well, nothing is actually bad about it, but there are a few things we feel we should mention.

Firstly, and most annoying is the inability to choose the number of laps per race in single player games. It's only two laps in Arcade mode and GT single races, with the rest of championships covering only three laps, or either 30 or 60 in the endurance races. The thing is that it takes a couple of laps to 'get into the groove' so to speak, and by then the race is over!

Other little things include: Not enough non-Japanese cars - where are



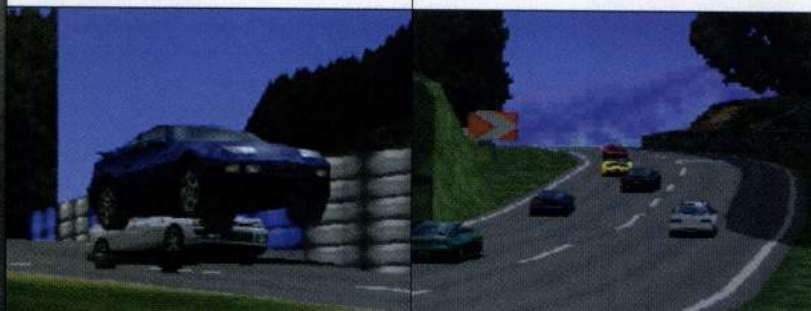
Two player splitscreen is the ultimate in two player racing. Although headaches can occur after many hours of play.

the Porsches, Ferraris and Holdens?! The handling of the cars is different to the Japanese version with a greater discrepancy between RWD and 4WD cars, though you obviously won't notice if you haven't played it.

However, all these deficiencies pale into insignificance once you're hammering down the straight in your favourite car that you've spent hours fine tuning. GT is just so perfect in every other respect that such minor blemishes go unnoticed. This game is bloody brilliant!



Wow! Gran Turismo is about as close as you'll ever get to driving a race cars without actually getting in one. The best driving game around, and will be for some time to come.



Imagine sitting in your dream vehicle and pulling off jumps like this one. Imagine just sitting in your dream vehicle let alone jumping in it.



For ultra realism you can't go past Gran Turismo.



The options features are huge and you could spend a whole day just tweaking your cars.



These shots are from the replay feature and don't necessarily indicate what the ingame graphics look like.



Another great thing about Gran Turismo is the way that you can change the colours of your car. Personally, purple cars look horrible.



The night courses will take a bit of getting used to but they're great fun when you get used to them.

Colin McRae Rally

You've seen them on the TV flying sideways through corners at breakneck speed, now here's your chance to be a World Rally Champion

I've always thought that driving in a kilt would give someone a definite advantage in the rough and tumble action of the world rally circuit. All that freedom of movement between the legs obviously gives any Scotsman an edge when handling the gears and brakes of your average rally car, and fans of the FIA coverage on TV can finally now understand why Colin's support crew occasionally have to hose him off, all that sweat and dust can lead to a very severe case of dusty kegs. And we all know what dusty kegs can do to a champion's lap times.

Dusty legs aside, what we have here is Codemasters' follow-up to their fabbo TOCA Touring Car Championship, and a pretty quick follow up at that. But don't get the impression that this game has been rushed though, because it hasn't. If anything, Colin McRae Rally is more polished and detailed than TOCA ever was, and best of all it's a lot more fun.

A different animal

I guess a lot of the people who plan on buying this game will already have V Rally. And why not? If you're into rally racing, you're into rally racing! So a bit of a com-

parison is probably the first order of the day. Straight off you can tell that the driving model in CMR is a very different animal to that of V-Rally. Both games place an emphasis on correct braking and positioning on the track, but CMR is quite a bit more forgiving. It also allows the cars to slide much more readily, whereas V-Rally preferred you to roll a lot more (much less fun!). Another major difference in the way that the games deal with the realities of rallying is in the way that CMR accrues damage to your vehicle during stages. This depends on your driving style and the amount and severity of accidents and punishment metered out to your car. Repairs to individual components add time to your stage, and at the end of a session you must decide if the performance decrease is bearable or if you will have to waste valuable time fixing things.

The other essential difference between CMR and V-Rally, or for that matter any other driving game with the exception of GT, is the greater detail in the environmental effects on your car's handling. The circuit conditions in CMR have a much greater impact on the way that you drive your car and learning to handle these conditions is vital. V-Rally 'cheated' a bit in letting you race in a conventional sense, against other cars head to head. CMR doesn't give you that option, as all the race modes simulate aspects of real rally racing. Because of that, Codemasters has put a lot of effort into making the road your main opponent. Which is as it should be!

Point of view

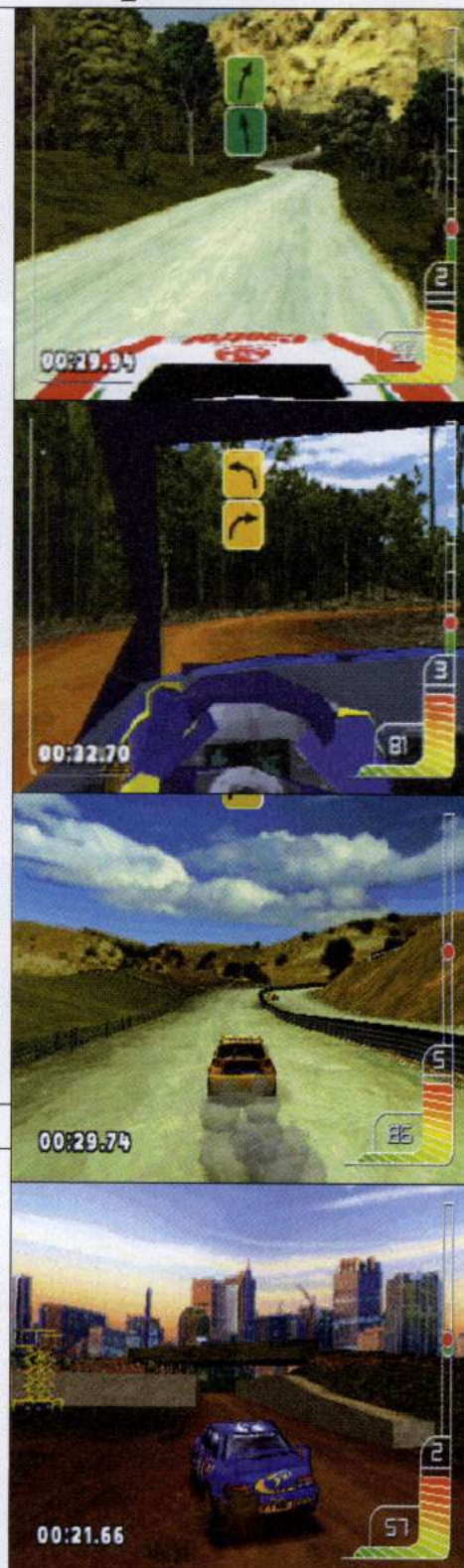
Speaking of which, the circuits in CMR are fantastic, both graphically and from a drivers point of view. Eight different countries make an appearance during a full season and each one has a six stages to be finished. Each also gets progressively harder as the road and weather conditions deteriorate the further you go. Codemasters has even included the special stages that have become very popular among rally crowds, allowing two cars to race each other side by side on a looped circuit. The feel of the tracks in all the different countries is quite unique and the terrain very distinctive. The Australian leg, for example, looks so typically outback that it just couldn't be anywhere else in the world. There is also a wee bit of humour for those with a sharp eye. The



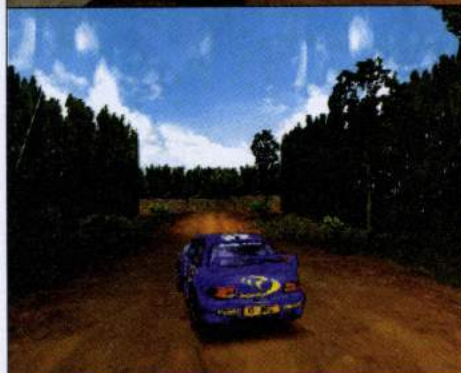
The replays show the crashes brilliantly.



The in-car views are great while racing two players. Try nudging the other cars, it's fun.



With four different views, the fussiest drivers will be kept happy. The challenge courses are the best.



The varying track surfaces make for ultra realistic driving conditions. Colin McRae Rally will have you driving on dirt, mud, clay, sand, gravel, tar snow and ice - all in various states of wet or dry as the case may be.

seventies Cadillacs parked in the drive-ways of the Greek peasant houses gave me a giggle at least!

On your marques, get set, GO!

You're going to need a car to get out there of course, and CMR starts you off with a choice of the top eight rally cars around at the moment. Codemasters has done something a bit different with the way these are accessed though. The four smaller front wheel drive cars (SEAT, Skoda, Golf and Renault) are only available at the novice level, while the faster 4WD ones (Impreza, Lancer, Corolla and Escort) only at the intermediate. Predictably there are also a few hidden surprises which I won't spoil for you here, suffice to say that there's treats-a-plenty in store for long-time followers of the rally scene.

Ultimately CMR is probably more of an arcade game than a simulation and has a much closer affiliation with Sega Rally than with V-Rally. That's not a criticism by the way, I thought V-Rally was too restrictive to be fun, whereas Colin McRae Rally is fun, big fun! It isn't one of your 'extreme power-slide' games either. While it is easy to throw your car around it isn't done in an exaggerated manner and it takes a bit of practice to be both fast AND slippery. Colin McRae could have done a lot worse than to put his name on this fine product. CMR is Fun with a rather large F, the split screen mode works very well and the support for the Dual Shock pad is the best I've experienced in any game.



Colin McRae Rally looks like the real thing, sounds like the real thing, and with a Dual Shock pad, feels like the real thing



You can custom tune your car to perform better in the terrain at hand (top left). Colin himself will teach you how to drive (top right). And yes that is an original Escort.



It's pretty hard driving like this.

TOCA Touring Cars 2

TOCA's back with a host of improvements and every detail, from the new rule changes to the latest paint jobs

When the original TOCA game burst onto the gaming scene last year, it received high critical acclaim for its excellent replication of the British Touring Car Championships, complete with a realistic driving style and a fastidious attention to detail. However, some people found it just a bit too fiddly with its sensitive handling and ease of spinning and the general driving on ice feel. Others also remained unconvinced by the somewhat blocky nature of the graphics. Well, Codemasters have had the chance to address some of these minor flaws in the sequel, and while TOCA 2 doesn't quite manage to wrest the crown from Gran Turismo, it comes closer than any game will for quite some time.

Off the Line

There hasn't been a radical shift between the two games, and while TOCA 2 does sport numerous tweakings (most notably in handling, graphics and AI) it remains essentially a very similar game to the original, only much, much better. Once again, the circuits presented are from the British touring car series, but to make things interesting there are also a number of tracks to unlock that are set in quite un-TOCA-like surroundings such as a city street track.

TOCA 2 also contains extra cars to be unlocked, and while sadly the tanks of the first game have departed, the inclusion of Formula Fords, Jaguars and TVRs, to name a few, more than makes up for it. These cars aren't just gimmicks however (in fact the Formula Fords provide the best open wheel driving yet seen on the PSX) and there are various support car championships to race in addition to your normal touring fare.

Handling in the first game was a bit of a contentious issue: on one side, many applauded its "realistic" handling and the need for concentration, careful braking and precision in general, while most others found the handling too twitchy and found it difficult to appreciate the true worth of the game. Well, the good news is that it's definitely easier to keep control of your cars in TOCA 2. Don't get me wrong, this is still a simulation requiring careful driving and should by no means be considered an easy game to just pick up and play. However it seemed to me that the handling was more forgiving, and I just

found myself doing a whole lot better than I was used to in this forum. It still remains very easy to spin, but the better handling and the fact that collisions don't instantly spell complete disaster insures that TOCA 2 is far more playable than its predecessor.

Outstanding performance

The whole racing format has been restructured to make championship races less tedious. There is now only one qualifying lap to set grid positions, followed by a sprint race, then a longer endurance race where pit stops come into play. Adding to the realism is the radio link to your pit crew, who update you as to when your team mate and the other drivers are making stops (the pit lane can get a bit crowded). Tires can be changed and damage repaired, if you think you've got time, but even if you've managed to avoid any incidents you may still have to pit to put a new set of tires on should the heavens suddenly open up. Yes, changeable weather is a new feature of TOCA 2 and, by jove, it's a good one!

The graphics in TOCA 2 have also been nicely overhauled, and the sometimes scratchy graphics of the first game have been left far behind. There's still the occasional glitches and lines in the track, but the sheer speed and smoothness of the motion makes it barely worth mentioning. Sound has also been souped up a bit with even beefier engine noises than before and good set of effects that really help put you in the seat. These production values coupled with the driving feel of TOCA 2 are what really makes it shine, and the help you get a good total driving experience.

While TOCA 2 definitely represents a successful advance on the original, it remains very similar to the original. Thus if you didn't really get into the original, it's unlikely that you'll be that passionate about this. However, fans and borderline people who found TOCA just a little tricky, will find this sequel a slick and highly playable effort. The addition of two player link mode as well as split screen with opposing cars only serves to make it more appealing even if you already own the first game.



Although it is really just a new version of the original, TOCA 2 is possibly the most realistic driving game yet



In car action is pretty darn good, and for a change it's actually good to drive like this. You can even see your wheels turning. Woo-hoo!



If you leave the track
you're stuffed!



Two player splitscreen racing is a rush and the crashes are twice as spectacular as single player. Not nearly as spectacular, however, as this bit of rollin' and tumblin' (bottom right).

BY: CODEMASTERS

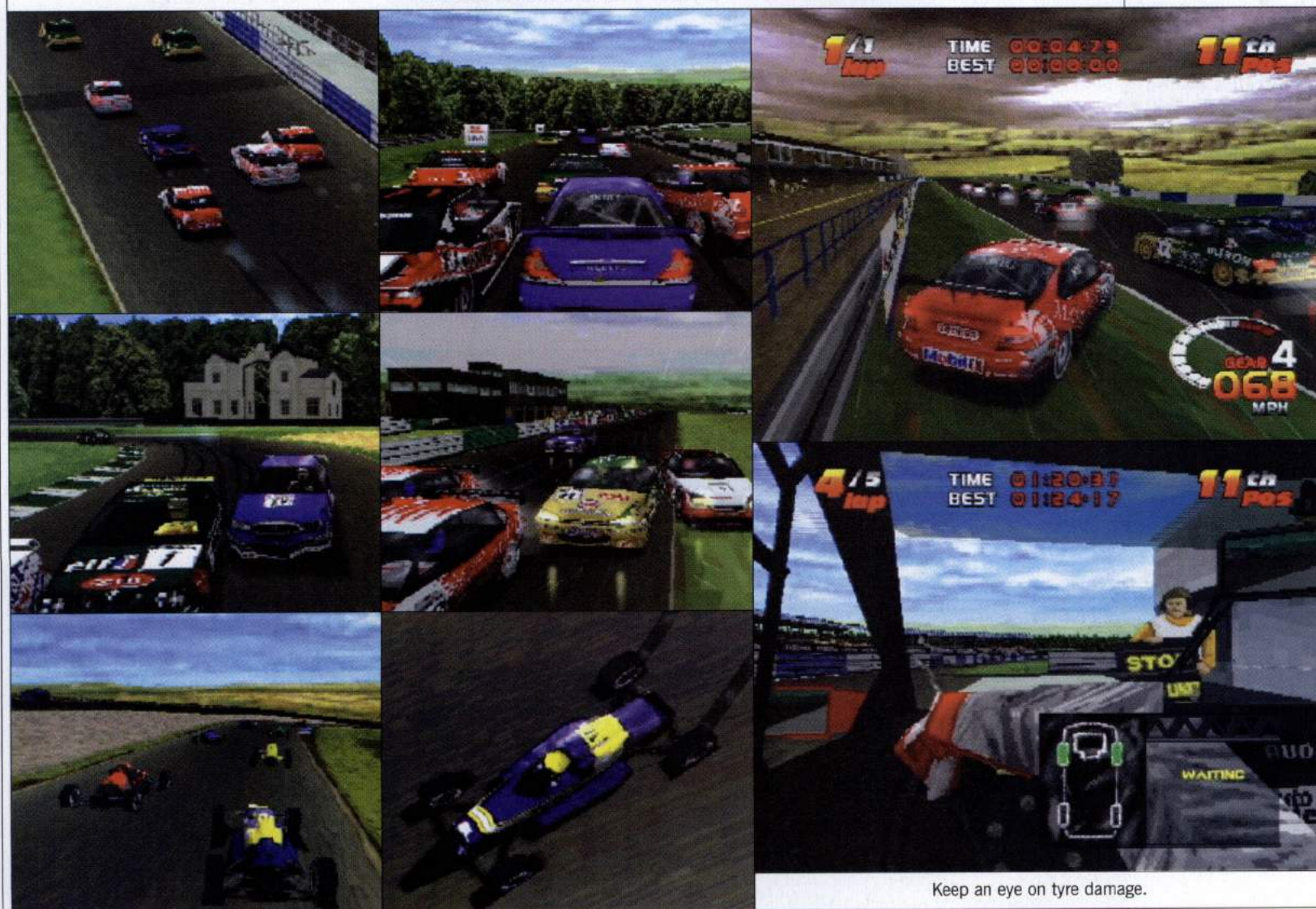
PRICE: \$89.95

PLAYERS: 1 - 2, 1 - 4 LINK-UP

ACCESSORIES: DUAL SHOCK

MEMORY CARD

CLASSIFICATION: G



Keep an eye on tyre damage.

The Toca cars are pretty damn hard to control. They're really touchy, and if you hit some grass, lookout! The Indy cars are great fun to fang around in. They're nimble and light and great fun for chuckin' skids. Lay rubber!

Moto Racer 2

Moto Racer has spawned its first sequel.

Does it stack up to the high standard of the original?

The original Moto Racer for the PlayStation became the definitive motorbike game for the system. Since then, a few pretenders have come along (hello Jeremy McGrath), but nothing has been able to knock it from the number one motocross sim spot.

Until now that is, and it's a testament to the game's quality that it took the sequel, Moto Racer 2, to dethrone it.

After the adrenalin-charged FMV intro that leaves you gasping for breath, and an insanely long load time that leaves you checking that your PlayStation isn't faulty, you're in the game.

To start with, you've got three options to get you underway - practice, single race and championship. Unless you're a total novice to the world of motorbikes, you can generally skip the practice and head straight into the racing action!

Two For The Price Of One

Moto Racer 2 is almost two motorbike games in one. There's the old favourites, the motocross bikes, where you take your mega-suspension demon of dirt bikes out into the forest or desert and get some big air as you rocket over jumps at 200kmh.



Day racing or night racing, take your pick.

If you're more of a straight speed freak, then you might find that the street bikes are more to your liking. You won't be able to launch these machines off any ramps, but you will be able to hug the corners and rocket down the straights quicker than their off-road counterparts.

For me, the best (read: most fun) of these two types of bikes would have to be the motocross variety. There's much more to do on the off-road tracks, including more track surfaces and different jumps and bumps in the road. Also, sticking your leg out during a gnarly slide around a tough bend is much more satisfying than simply easing your

street bike around a corner.

Lets not forget the jumping capabilities of the motocross bikes either! Although the final goal in Moto Racer 2 is to win the race or championship, the "race within a race" is to see who can the most height on their jump, and what you can do while in the air! Some of the cooler tricks include taking both hands off the handlebars, swinging both your legs off one side of the bike, or even standing on your head! (not all at once though) It really is insane stuff. Unfortunately, the most you can do on the street bikes is pop a little wheelie.



Track surfaces vary.



The stunts and jumps on the dirtbike tracks are gnarly. Just remember to keep yourself in the middle of the tracks.

More spectacular crashes are what is needed though. Unfortunately it's hard to come a total cropper on your bike.



It's not a good idea to take your bike into the river!

No Big Names

For each type of bike, there are eight to choose from. There are no "name" bikes available, like Honda or Suzuki, which is a shame. Instead, all of the bikes look the same, except for the colour. Each bike is ranked in terms of speed, grip, brakes and acceleration. If the real bike manufacturers were involved with Moto Racer 2, it could have almost taken it to a Gran Turismo level. Saying "I'll take the pink bike and you take the green one" isn't exactly what you'd hear pro-bikers saying before a race.

The graphics in Moto Racer 2 are quite detailed, which causes the game to run at a slightly slower rate to the original, but not to the point where it affects the gameplay. Racing while it's snowing looks quite special, and the night racing, especially on the vast desert tracks, is also a sight to behold.

There are four championships to conquer in Moto Racer 2, and all the championships are made up of eight courses. There's one with all street courses, one is motocross tracks, one is a mixture, and you can also make your own customised championships. Once you've finished first in the street,

motocross and combined championships you can then race in a special championship round, to prove that you're the king of biking.

To keep Moto Racer 2 fresh, there's also a track creator / editor! More and more car and bike games are implementing this feature, and it's a fantastic addition to Moto Racer 2. It's very simple to use, and the tracks you create feature just as much scenery and texture as the standard courses.

The two player split-screen mode is another groovy aspect to Moto Racer 2, and if anything adds longevity to a game, it's the ability to beat human as well as computer riders.

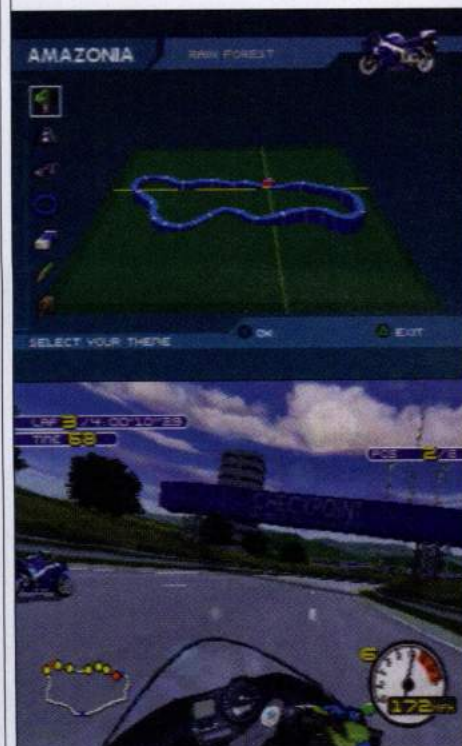
Moto Racer 2 isn't a true bike sim, but it's got just enough arcade elements to satisfy those of us who know nothing about motorbike racing without making a farce of the sport. Bung this baby in your PSX and sit back for some insane bike action. However, make sure you've got some patience, or the load time will send you nuts.



A fast arcade racer, Moto Racer 2 will provide hours of fun, especially in 2-player mode



Yeeee-haaaa...go the snow tracks!



The track editor lets you design any style of track you want. Heaps of jumps and bends are at a fingers length away.

When you do eventually stack it, you'll die laughing about the ridiculous stances and poses.



BY: ELECTRONIC ARTS

PRICE: \$99.95

PLAYERS: 1 OR 2

ACCESSORIES: MEMORY CARD

ANALOG PAD

CLASSIFICATION: G



Platform Games

Since their ancestors made their first tentative hops from left to right many years ago, platformers have evolved into the massive 3D adventures of today such as Crash and Spyro. However games like Abe's Exoddus prove that the old side-scrolling style still has life left in them yet.



42 CRASH 3: WARPED



46 SPYRO



48 MEDIEVIL



50 ABE'S EXODDUS



52 HEART OF DARKNESS

Crash Bandicoot: Warped

The Bandicoot is back for his third game, and this time he's got a few new tricks up his furry sleeve

BY: SONY

PRICE: \$69.95

PLAYERS: ONE

ACCESSORIES: MEMORY CARD

DUAL SHOCK

CLASSIFICATION: G

From the beginning, the Bandicoot called Crash turned heads and drew crowds. His addictive, simplistic gameplay and bright, colourful graphics have hooked so many people that he soon developed a following the likes of which only Mario and Lara have ever known. Sony has even had to publicly deny that he is a mascot for the PlayStation.

The third in the series about a dizzy bandicoot is about to hit these shores, and let me tell you, nobody will be disappointed.

Naughty Dog deserve a trophy for crafting such an excellent trio of legendary games. The first one blew our hair back as far as unprecedented visuals & grabbing gameplay were concerned, and the second was bought by almost everyone who got the first, and many who didn't. The third retains all the good points of the prequels, ditches the bad, and adds fantastic things.

World Beater

This is a top game, folks, enjoyable on a great many levels. I'm extremely pleased to have had to play it a lot, because it is a masterpiece. It's a few masterpieces, actually.

As with the Die Hard Trilogy, there is more than one kind of game in Crash 3. These different formats include the walk-along-jumping stages, a beautiful jetski simulation, an arcade space-shooter, a motorbike race and scuba diving stages. The stupendous part is, all of the different genres are represented almost as professionally as their current respective rivals, and often better.

The game itself is split up into five time worlds, each with five levels and a boss stage. Of the 25 levels, less than fifteen use the regular walking format. When you complete a Time World and its boss, you gain a special move. It's the greatest formula ever proven. RPGs use it in excess to provide a perpetual point to the game - there's always another level to achieve. Crash 3 doesn't overdo it, though. In total there are only five abilities to learn, but each improves the game so much that there isn't a need for more.

Familiar Fun

The gameplay remains as blatantly playable as ever before, only this time it gets better as you complete the game. At the start, Crash can jump, crouch, high-jump, slide and belly-flop already, not to mention spin around.

The stage layout in Crash: Warped is superb. By ditching all serious explanations, all 25 levels have been lumped into a central Time Warp Thingy area where you can choose to enter one of them, or save the game. No longer do you have to earn your save points to store the data. On the whole this method saves fuss, bother and the frustration of failing the

increasingly difficult save point stages of Crash 1.

The bosses are dreadfully cool as well. Three of them are pretty run-of-mill Crash arch enemies, but one of them is a huge mech with torpedoes, machine guns and heat-seeking mines. Coco flies a futuristic fighter plane to take him out, and the battle rises to the vast emptiness of space as the bad guy flees for his life.

Take another Look

Overall, I wouldn't hesitate to buy this title, and I'm an extremely picky gamer. This one screams bargain at me because it has a wide range of platforms to enjoy, delicious graphical splendour and a lifespan that stretches off into the distance. The first time you finish the game, you may only discover around 30% of it. This is because all of the levels have been designed to be played by a fully equipped Crash Bandicoot with all the new abilities.

The new attributes that Crash acquires are well thought-out, and extend the lifespan of the game ten-fold. The first boss gives you a pretty cool heavy belly flop. With it, Crash can smash reinforced crates and others in his approximate vicinity. The second is the extremely useful double jump. A bit like Jumping Flash, Crash can jump up twice, the second off thin air. This lets him access high areas previously forbidden to him. The third is a long spin ability. Crash can spin around for about five seconds straight, and is capable of gliding to a limited extent using this manoeuvre. The fourth is really cool. No doubt you've seen it here and there and wondered if it was a cheat. The Fruit bazooka allows Crash to shoot anything at all using the apple-shaped fruit he finds as ammunition. He can whip it out anytime on the regular stages and aim it at anything he can see. Once again, the analog pad helps give the delicate touch.

More than a game

As you start with no items, playing the game first time around is like an introductory course on how to use them. Getting all the gems is another story. There are three to five crystals and gems to be retrieved from each level, and some can't be touched until you've completed other areas and done other things. The guys at Naughty Dog had their thinking caps on obviously, so rich is the tapestry they call Crash Bandicoot: Warped.

The potential lifespan of this game still stuns me. Naughty Dog has done every possible thing to assure the extended appreciation of their game, from ability awards to cunning level designs. The diversity of the levels alone is enough to call it a collection of games instead of just one. Indeed it is just that. Apart from the definite sub-games with motorbikes and jetskis and whatnot, the regular walking stages are transformed into racing games with the addition of the



The graphics are lovely

and colourful.





speedy shoes, or you could play a shooting game with the Fruit Bazooka. Discover secret areas with the double jump and gliding abilities, and smash the previously un-smashable with the heavy belly flop.

This is rare case of quality over quantity, so those of you whingeing that 25 stages aren't enough deserve to be so foolish as to miss this gaming artwork. Without overdoing anything, Naughty Dog have nailed the game-play perfectly, and come up with a definitive example of how fine a PlayStation game can be. If you see this game in a shop, buy it. If you don't own a PlayStation, get one for this game. It's that good.

★★★★★

The scope of different genres represented within the one game make Crash Bandicoot: Warped a title you will never tire of



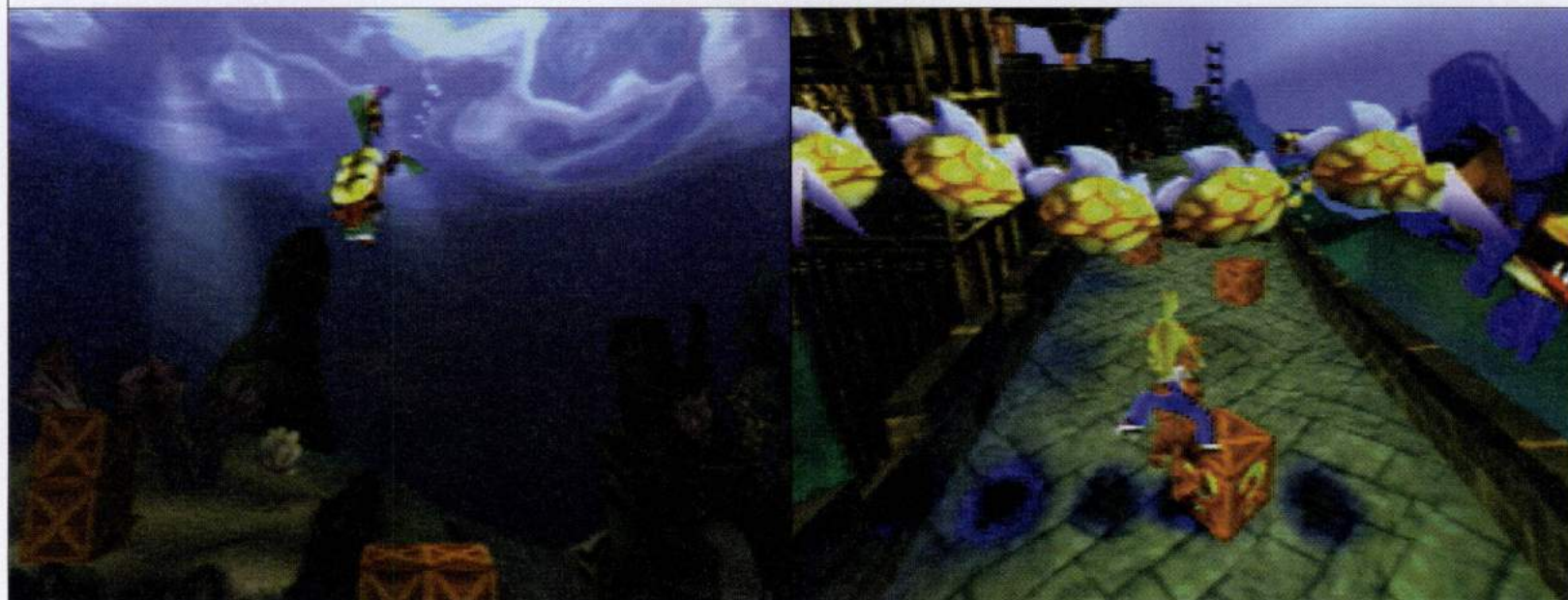
Run Crash! Run!! There's a friggin big dino after you man!!



Dealing with many different surrounds is all in a days work for Crash.



Rocket launchers make an appearance in this third installment.



The water stages are great fun to play-through. The dragons are a pain in the butt.



TNT boxes will make a mess of you if you touch them, but hey, you're a bandicoot that doesn't get fussed or stressed.

Jetski Beach Race

The stunning good looks of this amazing third instalment really made my eyes hit the screen. I'd forgotten how pleasurable it can be, but the smooth, vibrant, cheerful colours and special effects in Crash 3 just take you in. Detail can be seen crisp and clear as far as the eye can see into the depths of the pseudo 3D levels, and it can be truly relaxing.

The water in the jetski stages is just beautiful; you'll not see better on the PlayStation. As Crash's sister Coco, you splash up and down in the clear blue water, bobbing with such realism as to banish all doubt that you're there

on a jetski. The sun flashes off the surface of the water in bright waves as you become entranced with the small paradise islands around you.

These jetski levels are fenced in too. Buoyed in, actually, but the great thing is that you can turn around and get whatever boxes you missed. They didn't forsake the controls just because it's a sub-game, either. The watercraft is manoeuvrable in all directions with either the digital pad or the analog stick. There is a button for go, and you can turn sharply by pulling back and sideways, as on a real jetski.



It's Crash meets Baywatch.

Wild Tiger Ride

Similar to the hog and polar bear characters seen in Crash 1 & 2, a baby tiger takes Coco Bandicoot on its back for a couple of the stages. These levels will bring back memories for past and present Bandicooters, as they are pretty much identical to their sister stages in the previous Crashes, except for sprinting.

To turn it into a really hard run, you can make your animal sprint just by holding a button. That'll make you go faster and jump further for a little way,

adding to the gameplay possibilities. As usual, the visuals in these levels are astounding, and they have no trouble whatsoever keeping up with the game's furious pace.

There are occasional choices in the pathway you follow, too. Men under trap doors flip you up to the rooftops. You must pick the right route to get all of the boxes. While these levels might not be new, they are a greatly appreciated diversion from the slower walking stages.



Better not let the RSPCA know that you're riding tigers.

Mad Bomber Crash

This bandicoot can fly, too, as demonstrated superbly in the Mad Bomber stage, where you fly around with a machine gun, shooting down blimps, boxes and biplanes while performing elegant barrel rolls to avoid enemy fire. Oh my Dog (the Naughty one, of course), where did Naughty Dog find the time to create this terrific little game? It's so simple, and yet so irresistible.

You get infinite firepower and enemies, and a finite number of targets. Are

these guys geniuses or what? Controlling the bi-plane with the analog stick is just lovely, and shooting down big fat blimps? What could be more psychologically satisfying than that?

When the baddies are hammering you with bullets, you hear the sharp incessant clanging of their ammunition embedding itself into your fuselage. Combined with the sounds of the propellers of four different planes and the wind rushing in your ears, and you're there.



The bandicoot puts Biggles to shame.

Sunken Treasure

Crash has adventures underwater as well as on the road and in the air. The scuba diving stages look swimmingly wet, with dappled lighting effects on the ocean floor and movement in the water all around. Decked out in a wetsuit and flippers with air tanks on his back, Crash swims and spins

through coral reefs and eel infested areas while avoiding shark attacks and old sea mines.

Along the way he finds a funky underwater craft which allows him to travel extremely fast and shoot things with torpedoes. Just the thing to take out those porcupine fish.



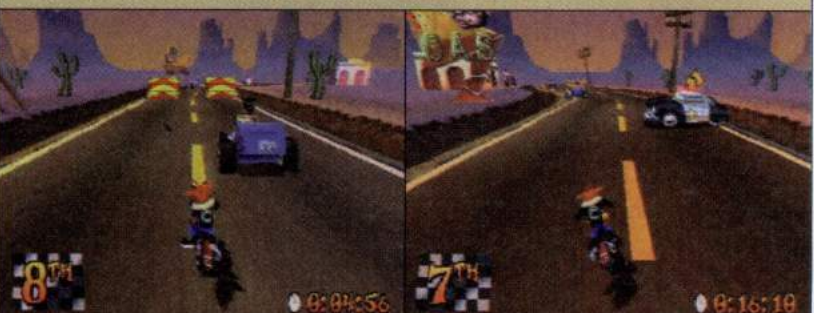
Coco struts her stuff on the jetski.

Hog Wild

His other fantastic setting involves a motorbike, a leather jacket, a long road and some cars. With just two buttons, one for stop and one for go, Naughty Dog has invented another fab sub-game with utmost simplicity at its core. On the road there are boxes, Wumpa fruit, other racing vehicles, ramps for jumping, police cars and speed boosters. The point is to come first. Another

is to smash all of the boxes.

Naturally, this sub-game is also analog compatible. They all are, but I felt I had to mention it again here because this really is a racing game, so it matters. How joyous it is to take the inside lane in a corner, scraping past a car with millimetres to spare, to steal victory from it and win the crystal back from Dr Neo Cortex.



Riding down the highway, nothin' on my mind.

Spyro The Dragon

Brace yourself for the cutest thing to hit the PlayStation ever, if you though Crash was cute, wait until you meet Spyro the Dragon!

The young purple dragon called Spyro has got to be the most disgustingly lovable little beast ever to feature in a PSX title. He may well be the next unofficial mascot of the grey box, simply because he's so damn adorable. Puny and pugnacious, he'll steal your younger sibling's heart, and maybe yours too. Here's why.

Big eyes on small bodies has always been a sure-fire recipe for gorgeousness - just look at Japanese anime for verification. Baby animals too are undoubtedly very popular creatures, unless you're into clubbing seals, that is. Combine the two with seamless graphics, give him a spirited, vengeful attitude, and a star is borne.

Assuming you're not a seal-clubber, Insomniac has created Spyro the Dragon in a clever attempt to reach down to a very young audience. By keeping the gameplay simple and immediately addictive, they've retained good chances of a more mature reception as well. It is even written in five different languages, and that's what I call classy.



Gnork's a Gnasty

Basically, it's like this: you're Spyro, and the main baddie, a rather obviously-named

green thug called Nasty Nork, has turned all the dragons in the world into statues.

The intro lays out this information with subtle humour at the start of the game. Someone behind the camera is interviewing a bunch of dragons, with a boom mike hanging down like you might see in a bad documentary. The adult dragons are asked about their opinions on Mr. Nork, and their answers somehow reach Nasty's ears, and tick him off. I can only assume that His Norkness didn't petrify Spyro because he thought that he was too young to bother with.

So the infant dragon is left in the player's hands, and he has to rescue all of his stony reptilian relatives. Naturally, there's also a bountiful booty of stolen treasure to recover as well, in the form of coloured gems. Gems, you understand, have flat sides all over, and are therefore easily represented in polygonal form. This is probably why they're a key feature in so many 3D games today.

Young and free

It plays like, er, Mario 64. I would suggest that it plays similarly to the almighty bandicoot Crash, but the environs are open

and have no set paths to follow, giving you total freedom of movement. Gems and enemies are scattered all over the place, so it is completely up to the player to decide where to go.

The worlds are free-ranged, as I said, and are littered with portals to other sub-worlds. Each sub-world has so-many hundred gems and two or three dragons to rescue, and almost all of them have unique enemies. As there is no time limit, the incentive to find all the gems compels you to search the entire place looking for the last few.

Whenever you find a dragon's statue, you release it from Nasty's spell. It then gives you some useless advice which you discovered two worlds ago, like "To charge an enemy, press the Square" and then disappears. These dragons look pretty good, and are used as save points in the game.

Using the digital direction pad, he only gallops. The only exception would be when walking up a slope, which slows him relative to the incline. He can also turn around slowly or instantaneously and point in any of 360 directions, employing totally the analogue capabilities.

Spyro can also charge enemies using his horns, roll to the left or right, jump and glide slowly to the ground, however he can-

The save game fairy.

What a sort!



The main idea is to free all the dragons and collect all the gems. Simple enough for you stupid? If you look close you can see little Spyro sneezing up a fireball. This is particularly usefull at barbeques.



The views are quite impressive, as you can see you can control where you look.

not swim. Watching him drown is heart-wrenchingly pitiful, so don't even think about giving him a bath. Oh and, of course he wouldn't be a dragon if he couldn't breath fire.

Burn, Baby, Burn!

All of the game's baddies are defeated by either ramming or toasting them. That's where the brain work comes in, though there's not much of it, really. Some enemies can only be rammed, some only singed, and as the levels progress the baddies get trickier, and sometimes require a pinch of patience or thought.

The trial and error method is the only real way to find out which enemies you must torch and which you must butt. Some foes have fireproof shields and are therefore wanting a taste of your horns; others are equipped with an even bigger set of horns than the little dragon's, and so they need a hot flame to extinguish them.

It is an irresistible pleasure to just burn around each world at ramming speed simply because it is much faster than galloping. This way you can head butt who-

ever gets in your way, and if that fails, cook 'em. Getting whacked by an enemy now and then ain't so bad, especially if you've got a golden dragonfly.

To look at this game is to see true PlayStation eloquence. The little purple beast is beautifully presented with his tiny wings and twisted horns. It is clear that they spared no expense with his design and construction, as there are barely any noticeable corners on his body. Likewise with all of the foes that he meets on his grand quest. Each one is a comical representation, of a bull, robber, shepherd or whatever, and all are smoothly depicted with no seams or straight lines on them.

The surroundings too are always very clear. The various worlds you visit are diverse in their scenery, and every object is obvious. The exaggerated style of art in the game gives off a feeling of fun and safety. Not even the bosses are at all frightening.



Spyro would be ideal if you want to buy someone a PlayStation game, but just aren't sure which... You can't hate it



Big bosses: mix it up with a bear and a scarecrow.



What's with the freak on the stilts? Well, he's a sheep in scarecrow's clothing and he'll kick your butt if you don't watch out.

You can use the cannon to fire at your enemies.

BY: **SONY**

PRICE: **\$79.95**

PLAYERS: **ONE**

ACCESSORIES: **MEMORY CARD**

DUAL SHOCK

CLASSIFICATION: **G**

Medievil

Fans of good old fashioned hack 'n' slash gameplay will be right at home in Sony's new sprawling 3D platform adventure, Medievil



Dan's keeping an eye on you.

After languishing in the limbo of imminent release for what seems like an eternity, Medievil has finally arrived, bringing to an end year long publicity trail, as this new action platformer from Sony's Cambridge division makes its belated appearance. So, after such a long wait, the obvious question is was it worth the wait, or is it just another example of great publicity campaign, forgettable game? Well, fortunately for those with a grey box in the house, Medievil successfully combines a variety of gameplay elements with some great production values to come up with a game that is entertaining and involving, and is tempered with a bizarre sense of humour that permeates the action.

A sprawling affair

The 30 odd levels in Medievil are large sprawling affairs with multiple paths and much exploration required. Most of the levels are mainly concerned with finding keys to make your way through the level whilst finding key objects, with some bosses thrown in for good measure. On some levels there are also some additional quests with their own sub levels, and there's even a chance to play as Morten the earthworm. This may sound like pretty traditional platform objectives, and to a certain extent that's true. However, what is of more importance is where Medievil differs from that style. In Medievil there are no things to be collected in hundreds to get free lives, you don't jump on your enemies' heads, and there aren't really many platforms to consider. Instead, your health is handled more like in an action game. You have a tasty array of weapons at your disposal, and there's a greater concentration on exploration and puzzle solving. Such is the emphasis on killing in Medievil that some levels require you to kill almost everything in sight so as to retrieve a chalice and the right to visit the Hall of Heroes.

Graphic design and implementation of these levels and their inhabitants has all been nicely handled with good colours and fine lighting effects. The design of the levels in particular go a long way towards making this game by avoiding that repetitive feeling so common in similar games.

Room to swing an axe

Where Medievil really shines is its speed of play. Even when you're being mobbed by a screen full of zombies or killer pumpkins, there's no problems with slowdown. It can get a bit congested, but you're still free to hack and slash without interruption or delay.

With quick motion though, we need to consider control. Analog control is definitely the better bet here (with dual shock supported), as digital can be a bit on the heavy side. With analog however, it can be tough to simply turn around to face enemies instead of accidentally running around in circles. This problem relates to the fact that control of Dan is screen relative (as opposed to the standard Tomb Raider or Resident Evil character relative style). This takes a bit of getting used to and can be a bit fiddly where precise control is required, but it's not a major setback. Control problems do arise, however when the auto camera change kicks in. The only way to really avoid this is to stop moving when the



Ouch! Green lightning. Beware of things that fly, such as bats. They tend to be hard to see in shadows as they're....black.



Make good use of Dan's mighty power swing.

Impressive light effects abound.



Oh dear, Dan's about to be smacked with a large frying pan. It's obviously his mum.

camera swings, or risk falling off whatever you're on. On a related fault, when you do attempt to control the camera manually, it seems to never be available when you want it, due to your location or some such factor.

Sensational sound

A lot of the above detail makes Medieval a good game, but what pushes it up to the level of quite good indeed are the little touches and the general commitment to production style. By far the most obvious illustration of this is the excellent sound in Medieval.

Sound effects are quite nicely done with some bizarre touches (such as the happy villagers la la la'ing their way through life) and some fine suspenseful moments (such as being able to hear enemies before they appear). While the effects are very good, the music is simply sensational. Composed in a similar style to Danny Elfman's work in various Tim Burton films, the music is very successful in creating the dark, yet humorous feel of Medieval. The music isn't triggered by random events either, and at various points, the music changes significantly to reflect the drama, tension or idiocy of a specific scene.

In the end, Medieval is a great game that's really a genuine pleasure to play. Sometimes you can get stuck on some fiendish puzzle, but in the usual fashion, once you've worked it out, execution of the solution is a simple affair. As Medieval is also a fine prospect in that it definitely becomes more fun to play as you get into it. It took me a couple of days to really feel comfortable with the control and gameplay style, but by that point I was well and truly hooked. When you are stuck in a level, and can't seem to get through, you can revisit earlier levels to let off steam, and in fact going back can often be a good idea, as new

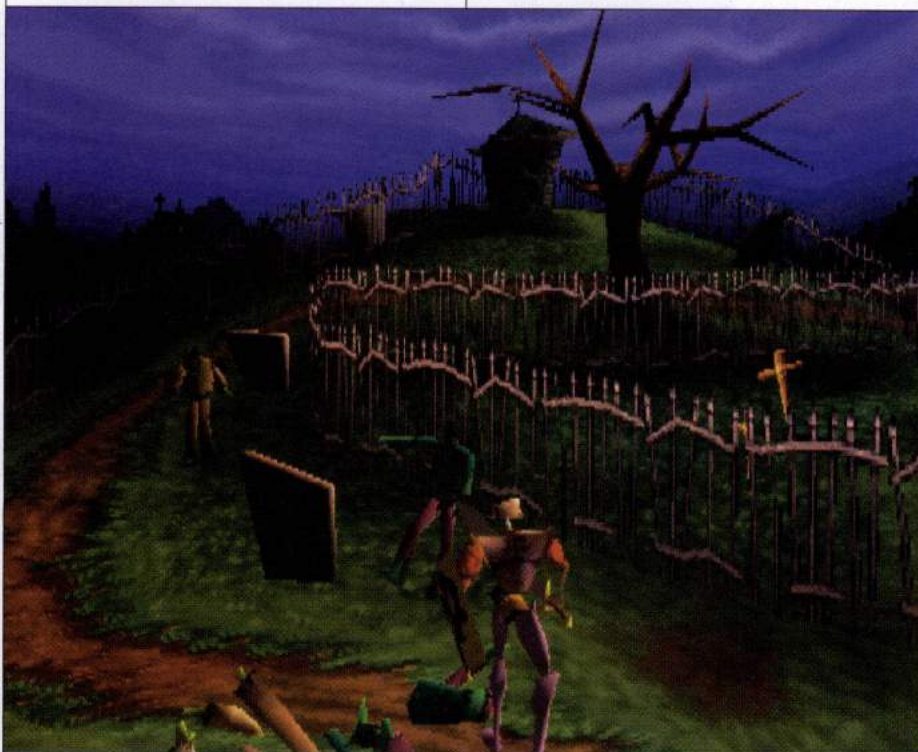
weapons can help you open the way to previously unreachable secret areas. All up though, it's great to see a game that draws on established gaming traditions, yet creates a unique style of game, and as such Medieval should be well received by most everyone.



Medieval is a great action/adventure with large levels and heaps of things to do, and the graphic presentation is superb. More to it than meets the eye



Make good use of the zombies as they can help with your mission.



These zombies don't want to rip your scalp off and eat your brains, they actually want to help. If you're feeling particularly ticked off though, you can still slash and stab 'em.

BY: **SONY**

PRICE: **\$69.95**

PLAYERS: **ONE**

ACCESSORIES: **MEMORY CARD,**

DUAL SHOCK

CLASSIFICATION: **G8+**

Abe's Exoddus

Abe's back, and he's brought some of his friends to help him save the souls of their ancestors

It's a pretty raw deal to find out that you and your fellow worker's ultimate destiny is to be turned into a tasty treat. But wouldn't it annoy you even more to discover that on top of that, your ancestor's bones are being used as a vital ingredient for an alcoholic beverage?

That's what our hero Abe has just found out during the celebrations for Rupture Farms', well, rupture at the conclusion of Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee.

The brew is cruelly named SoulStorm, perhaps because those poor Mudokon spirits must be fuming to have their remains violated in such a way! Being the heroic kind of chap, Abe immediately sets off to the burial grounds with a bunch of comrades to settle the score once again with those damn Glukkons, who seem to want the entire Mudokon bloodline - present and past - terminated in the name of consumption! Unfortunately, also being Abe, the mission planning was horribly inadequate and in no time he's once again stuck alone in a rather unfriendly place overrun with nasties!

Abe's Exoddus is essentially an extension of the previous game: a brain teasing puzzle cleverly presented in the form of a platformer. The goal is to set free the cap-

tured Mudokon slaves that have been deliberately blinded by the Glukkons to make bone mining a more 'streamlined' process, and destroy SoulStorm Brewery of course!

As before, Abe's totally weaponless, and being a rather weedy chap, he'll certainly get trashed in hand to hand combat. So in order to make progress, you must move Abe stealthily, enlist help from fellow Mudokons before freeing them and use Abe's special powers to outsmart or take out the plethora of enemies encountered along the way.

Talking heads

Abe-speak was widely regarded as an innovative feature that put Oddysee ahead of the pack; there was nothing else like it on the Playstation. In the sequel, his vocab and actions have been expanded to a total of eight to accommodate new challenges he has to face.

Comrades met along the way often suffer from abnormal status. Laughing giddily due to funny gas, morosely depressed thanks to downing SoulStorm or just plain pissed off - they're not about to listen to anybody asking for assistance or offering help! So slap the laughs or blues out of them and calm

Remember to control Sligs with a chant.

them down from anger with an apology to get them on your side.

By yelling 'all of ya!' you can get the attention of a whole bunch of Mudokons before asking them to lend a hand. Just remember they're all blind and special care must be taken to get them all into position - how will you ever live with yourself if you send them all into certain doom?

The speech functions also play a larger role with the enemies you possess; later levels have voice locks that only Sligs can activate. Whilst possessing such a nasty, the most common speech commands are a to call for attention, wait and follow.



The intro movie fills in the story really well.



The beauty of Abes Exoddus is that it requires a fair amount of cranial power to solve some of the puzzles, and still leaves room for a bit of tricky button pushing as well.



If you piss your mates off then you'll have to calm them down before they'll follow you.

Depending on what you possess, more vocab or specific moves or attacks are possible. When there's a pack of enemies idling around, possess one of them (provided there's no orbs to stop you). By getting the pack to follow it as far away from Abe as possible may give him the few nanoseconds crucial for slipping by. Should you forget the various button combos, the total command list for Abe and possessable creatures can be accessed in a flash.

More of the same

Just like Oddyssey, Abe's Exoddus starts off easily enough and lulls you into a false sense of confidence with a gradual learning curve. It's very immersive and addictive. The production values are great - just look at those awesome CG cut scenes! You get some laughs and it's a buzz when you figure out how to fool the bad guys or solve a puzzle sequence. And then WHAM! Your brain soon overloads with half-arsed ideas on how to get Abe from one side of the screen to the other as the poor chap dies left, right and centre.

I'm at two minds about it. On one hand,

Abe's Exoddus - like its predecessor - is a stand out because it goes against the standard platformer conventions. No gems to pick up, no cute fluffy characters. The speech and communication between characters remains a one of a kind in context of other PSX platformers, and you really have to use your noodle to progress, unlike some of the pure reflex-dependent blast-fests.

But casual players can get alienated from the fun as the challenge level spikes off the scale and fans of the more conventional shooter will be screaming for Abe to nick a gun! It's definitely one of the hardest games I've played for a while!

Ultimately, if you liked Oddyssey, you'll probably love Abe's Exoddus. It's one of the most graphically outstanding 2D games of late and boasts solid, challenging gameplay. If you've somehow never heard of Abe and his adventures, give this a go and be prepared for many late nights!



Wanna rock-hard challenge, big laughs and a universe of very weird characters? Abe's Exoddus is the game for you!



Just follow the directions and you should be right.



In this latest Abe adventure it's possible to control up to five different Mudokons to fulfill tasks or challenges.

Take in mind though that the more Mudokons you control the more that can be accidentally killed.

BY: SONY

PRICE: \$79.95

PLAYERS: ONE

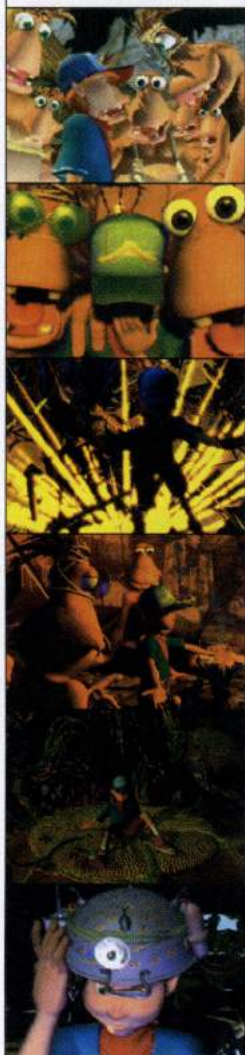
ACCESSORIES: MEMORY CARD

DUAL SHOCK

CLASSIFICATION: G

Heart of Darkness

The French have a flair for style, and this game is one of the most stylish yet to grace the PlayStation



That's quite a funky

hat dude.

Hearth of Darkness is concerned with the adventures of a young boy named Andy and his quest to find his lost dog Whiskey. These adventures take place in a bizarre world of dark creatures and general weirdness. If you're familiar with the Iz-filled outback scenes from the animated series The Maxx, then you're on the right track. By opting for 2D, the producers have come up with some finely detailed backgrounds and, quite frankly, the look of the graphics is superb.

Of particular note is the animation of the various characters in HOD, with a level of motion unprecedented in a game like this. The resulting appearance of the game brings a new meaning to the word fluid and feels more like a big budget animated feature than a video game. To further this cinematic quality, HOD contains a vast amount of FMV occurring throughout the game. The production and animation quality of this fully rendered material is absolutely stunning and with its quirky characters and fine sense of atmosphere it helps to fully immerse you in the game.

One of this things that really contributes to this atmosphere, both in the gameplay

and the FMV, is the excellent sound. The in-game effects are really tasty, with the various beasts all making some quite disturbing sounds. Andy himself adds a great deal to the sound effects, with good footsteps, hard breathing, grunts of effort and so forth.

What's even better is the music. The producers have been particularly intelligent here and rather than just paying some hack to crank out the audio equivalent of processed cheese, they actually went out and hired a bona fide composer.

Bruce Broughton has a huge list of Hollywood films to his credit and the inclusion of his music here makes a big difference to the overall atmosphere. To put the icing on the cake, it actually sounds like the music was recorded by an orchestra rather than assembled from a cunning selection of samples, and again this adds enormously to the overall quality and feel of the title.

Nimble Fingers, Working Brain

We're all more than familiar with games that have flashy FMV and intros, yet sadly fail to deliver when it really counts, so the question emerges: "How does Heart of Darkness really play?" The short answer is "Very well!"

In HOD, the gameplay is a careful blend of platform elements that requires a combination of dextrous control and some serious thinking. Some of the scenes need nimble finger work (especially on the harder difficulty levels), but usually it's fairly easy once you've worked out just exactly what it is you're supposed to be doing to move on to the next scene.

Sometimes though, working this out is what can become extremely frustrating and you will find yourself banging your head on the nearest pointy object and screaming for release on more than one occasion. Once you've got through a scene it's usually pretty easy to repeat the feat, so you don't have to worry about getting really stuck. To help you in this area you can also save at any point during the game.

Tantalizing gameplay

The intensity of mental and physical action coupled with the awesome production values makes Heart of Darkness a truly compelling gaming experience. Even when I was stuck I kept on hammering away at it for the simple reason that I wanted to see more. The way the action



The beauty of Heart Of Darkness is it requires brains as well as dexterity. If you simply rush straight into it then you'll surely perish.

There aren't too many enemies to deal with but the ones that are there are a tad tricky at times.



BY: INFOGRAMES

PRICE: \$89.95

PLAYERS: ONE

ACCESSORIES: MEMORY CARD

CLASSIFICATION: G

Fossil me up Scotty! Don't forget that enemies hide in shadows totally undetected until you're right under them, then they pounce.

Cool weapons abound. Well okay they don't abound but the one weapon you do have is a killer.

progresses towards and away from the various FMV scenes makes HOD a very immersive game.

A lot of this success has to do with the cinematic approach of the title, as the careful blending of the production, the gameplay and the cut scenes makes HOD feel more like an interactive cartoon than anything else. The FMVs not only relate directly to the action, they are also quite entertaining to watch. In an impressive move, you can record these FMVs (or cinematics as the game calls them) as part of your saved game so as to view them at you leisure.

Short and sweet

After reading all of this you're probably thinking, "Damn that sounds pretty good!" It is, it really is, and while I was playing Heart of Darkness I genuinely forgot about everything else I was supposed to be playing. I felt compelled to play this game more than anything I've seen for a while, except for maybe FFVII.

However, HOD didn't really last that long. It's true that I was playing the game on easy setting, but it only took me a few days to get through all that HOD has to offer. Even on the harder settings, the only difference is

the number of enemies.

In the end, HOD is a success due to the huge amount of work that has gone into it. With so many games being rushed out half finished, it makes a difference to see something that's had so much effort put into it and that effort has paid off in a big way. HOD is a very complete game and it's hard to fault any individual element of the title. This is one of those games that's worth having a look at even if you're not usually receptive to this style of game.



Heart of Darkness is quite simply a top quality product and the fact that it looks like a kiddie platformer shouldn't deter gamers after a good game



Don't fall buddy 'cause it's a long way down and your insurance won't cover you.



Warning: Do not eat the mushrooms!



Action Games

Guns and action make an excellent combination when it comes to video games, and here we have some of the finest examples available. Thrill to the epic adventures of Lara Croft, get into a killing mood with Duke Nukem or just scare yourself witless with the horror classic Resident Evil 2. Whatever way you like to let off steam, there's a game here for you.



56 | TOMB RAIDER 3



58 | DUKE NUKEM



60 | TENCHU



62 | GHOST IN THE SHELL



64 | RESIDENT EVIL 2



66 | COLONY WARS

Tomb Raider III

She's back! The girl with the male gaming community wrapped around her finger is back for her third adventure on the PlayStation



Use stealth to conquer.

Welcome to the third instalment of Tomb Raider. Yes the lovely Ms. Lara Croft is back in another adventure that will take her from her cosy home in England to a frozen island oasis in the Antarctic wastelands. Naturally it is up to you as the player to solve all the new and challenging stages and if you thought the first two were hard, you're in for a surprise with Tomb Raider 3.

The aliens are coming?

The storyline for Tomb Raider 3 starts with the game's luscious opening FMV that shows a meteor hurtling to earth. The alien asteroid crashes into the sea around Antarctica, forming a new island.

Fast forward a few hundred years when a group of Polynesian islanders come across this beautiful oasis off the coast of Antarctica. They love the new island and decide to set up their new home there. Out exploring one day they come across the meteor with four broken pieces lying on the ground. Like the naive natives they are, they start worshipping the meteor. Little do they know that the rocks are radioactive, and so they all die a horrible and slow death.

Skip another few hundred years and Charles Darwin has stumbled upon the long deserted island. Charles and his

cronies discover the wonderful stones and leave the island with them tucked snugly into their packs. The rocks still have their alien powers and so, after conveniently dispersing the rocks across the globe, Darwin's dudes also die.

Now to the present day where we find out that some eager explorers have learned about the stones, and they want to harness their powers for themselves. This is where we take control of Lara to track down all of the stones before some other explorer finds them.

After the opening FMV you can either dive straight into the game by heading off to the first area, which is Northern India, or you can go to Lara's home. It's a lot easier to actually play the game if you've gone to Lara's and learnt what all the buttons do, and there are some new moves like crouching and crawling that even veteran Raiders need to know how to do before heading off to India.

Bigger than ever

The phenomenon that is Tomb Raider just got even bigger. The improvements in this latest version are outstanding when compared to the differences between Raider 1 and Raider 2. To start with, there's more of a sense of freedom in the level design, no longer having the corridor feeling that the

first two had. The labyrinthine layouts will have even the most map-minded Lara lovers frequently consulting the compass, as Eidos have made the most of the three dimensional potential.

The lack of obvious pathways or set routes makes it a better game for exploring, and such action is often rewarded with ammunition or health pick-ups. The open, random appearance of the different environments invite you to search all of the nooks and crannies, few of which have no goodies. It may not be possible to go everywhere, but it's pretty darn close, and finding out whether you can is all the fun.

The save game function is a great deal more applicable this time around, with Lara collecting save crystals along the way and using them whenever she wishes. It is a much more practical and user-friendly method than in the previous Raiders.

The girl kills

Another major improvement with Tomb Raider 3 is with the enemies. Unlike the first two games that had limited baddies to kill at the one time, this one has stacks of enemies practically lining up to feel Lara's deadly touch. Graphically, the foes you face are the shining stars of the game. Each one is proportioned correctly and moves realis-



The gun explosions look great in number three as do the other lighting effects.



Where the hell is everyone?

tically. Some of them, like the tigers, can even track you by scent, while the monkeys can nick off with your stuff if you don't keep a watchful eye out (unless you shoot them).

The human enemy count is also a lot higher with facility guards, snow troopers, tribesman, oil workers and mutants to name a few.

Although there have been numerous improvements over the first two games in gameplay and artificial intelligence, the graphics aren't really any better. I'd even go as far as to say that the original Tomb Raider looks a lot nicer. The overly green and luscious canopies in the opening level are bewilderingly rich at a distance, but up close the textures are poorly pixellated and can be rather rough. The other problem with the graphics is the amount of darkness and shadows that are used. This may be effective on newer brighter TVs, but the older ones won't react very favourably at all.

Overall though, Tomb Raider 3 is another jolly romp with Lara Croft. It has heaps of puzzles that will strain the brain and has enough enemies to keep you on your toes the entire time. Like the first two, it also has

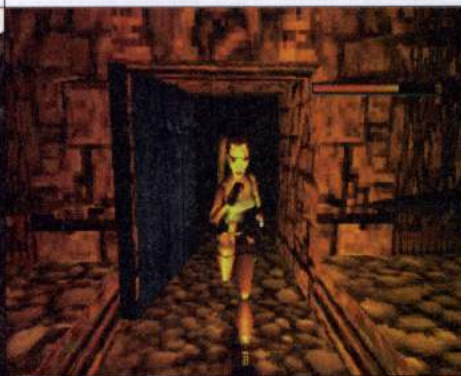


Spooky villages and even spookier head hunters are everywhere in this stage.

some of the best mood music of any game and you can still get surprised by sneaky creatures. Just wait until you come across the T-Rex and other dinosaurs: very cool indeed. If you're a fan of the first two Raider games then you'll love this latest instalment and if you've never played any of them before, where have you been?



Perhaps a bit too similar to the previous games, Tomb Raider III is nonetheless a great continuation of the series



Look at that beautiful rock design. Just like the real thing.



The various scenes and locations are fantastic, each having great atmosphere.

Beware of enemies in dark corridors, you can't see them but they can see you.

BY: EIDOS

PRICE: \$89.95

PLAYERS: ONE

ACCESSORIES: MEMORY CARD

DUAL SHOCK

CLASSIFICATION: M

Duke Nukem: A Time To Kill

Duke's back, and this time he's not satisfied with killing all present, so he's going back in time to kill everyone he missed!



Behold my hand that doth blow shit up 'n that!



Have you seen Fred? Yeah some of him's over there...and there...and there.

Before you go and say: "It's a Tomb Raider rip-off!", there are quite a few aspects of the latest Duke game which never featured in Ms. Croft's adventures, although the game has its fair share of massive mammarys, too. It would be like saying Tenka was a stolen idea because Doom did it first, or that Rally Cross was a cheap imitation of V-Rally.

Although Duke: A Time To Kill is pretty much the same style of game as Tomb Raider, appearances can be deceptive and there's more to Duke than what you see on the surface.

Evil Pigs

The world has become full of evil pig-men who've jumped through a time warp and turned Duke's motorbike into a little girl's tricycle, just to make him mad. And that he sure is. This game is about killing, pure and simple, and if you're not, you're probably looking for more ammo.

After playing for five minutes, I soon discovered why Tomb Raider was designed with an automatic aiming feature. It is bloody hard to point him at a pig thirty metres away and shoot with any accuracy. Get any closer, and the pig starts hitting you. Fortunately, Duke has an automatic aiming feature, too, but you still must point him in the general direction of the enemy for it to work.

There is also an Aim button. It is the same as the Look button out of TR. While holding it, you can see all around yourself from the character's point of view. In Duke, there is also a red pinpoint which tells you where your next bullet will land. This feature allows for precision in your aiming, so you can pick off unsuspecting fools at a safe distance.

Duke about town

Another thing that set Duke Nukem 3D apart from many other Doom clones was its level design. Most other first-person shooters were so involved with creating a scenario unlike mundane old reality that they'd end up with just another dank dungeon, or an uncomprehensible mess of futuristic computer banks.

By opting to create contemporary surroundings, Duke retains the option to toy with them and inject humour into the game via the everyday settings you come across. You can use the public telephones, lose health on the cigarette vending machine, and even pay the strippers to do a little jiggle for you.

In true Duke tradition, just about everything in the game can be destroyed. Most things simply smash into little bits and then sink into the floor, but some reveal hidden medikits, weapons or ammunition. This merely acts as an instruction telling players to wreck everything they come across, which strangely never seems to lose its appeal. If you see something in this game, you shoot it whether it moves or not.

Beasts & Blood

Because of some silly rule that says you can't make a graphically bloody game with humans as the main targets, you'll find a weird assortment of foes like the pig and lizard-men. They aren't smart, can't do much, and they have bad aim, but they make nice fat targets.

You have a choice between none, some, or lots of blood. Baddies dissolve into the ground, leaving nothing but a red splatter stain behind. The way each enemy crumples to the floor or staggers back in pain



In multiplayer mode you can be the standard Duke or the new Western Duke that comes with his own horse and flies.

The beauty of the multiplay is that you get to hunt down your mates like filthy dogs.



It's public commuter Duke, no it's Roman Duke, no it's parking meter Duke!

when killed is satisfying enough. There are bosses too, of course. These guys are huge, and there's usually some trick to killing each one, so it's not just a shooting frenzy every time.

He's Our Man!

Much attention has been paid to the animation of Duke and his gear. Running around the place, his backpack jiggles on his back and when you execute a backflip, he really throws his whole weight into it. When you move forward in a crouch, he does commando rolls. He even strafes in a masculine way.

When he is left standing idle, he doesn't keep still for long. In a moment the Duke'll be urging you back to the game with a gesture: "C'mon!", then he scratches his arse, cracks his knuckles, rubs his testicles or sniffs his armpits for the complete blokey appeal.

Controlling him with an old-fashioned eight-way pad can seem slow at first, but you can set the speed to whatever suits you. Analogue control works too, but it takes a while to get to grips with. It's not really necessary in a game like this where mainly you just want to run and aim in straight lines.

Duke: A Time To Kill is a nice upgrade of the series. There's nothing new exactly, but

there's a fresh idea or two at play. The split-screen levels are pretty standard as far as multiplayer levels go, but the two-player aspect does stretch the game's lifespan a bit.

If you liked Tomb Raider, then check this before you buy it. If you thought Tomb Raider lacked a decent number of enemies and weapons, get Duke now.



A great continuation of the Duke series and certainly worth a look for fans of high octane action, however the gameplay is somewhat repetitive

BY: GT INTERACTIVE

PRICE: \$89.95

PLAYERS: ONE OR TWO

ACCESSORIES: MEMORY CARD

DUAL SHOCK

CLASSIFICATION: M



I wish you'd bathe before allowing me to slaughter you. You stink!



Now that's what I call seeing stars!



It's the "Shit is burning Show" hosted by Destruction Duke.

Now there's no need to go to pieces.

Tenchu: Stealth Assassins

Looking for a real game of stealth and strategy, with just the right amount of violence? This could be it.

To start with, you play a ninja. Not a corny ninja like that of the upcoming Eidos release 'Ninja' also reviewed in this issue, but a real one. You live in feudal Japan, have oodles of honour, and you must fade into your surroundings before you kill, hence the title.

The game plays in the third person, a little like Tomb Raider, One or O.D.T. Once you've

chosen your character from the two available, you run around the place trying not to be seen. If you are spotted, you bring disgrace down on you, along with a bunch of guards who attack without hesitation. You can always slash it out with them if you want to, using your sword to kill them slowly and attracting the attention of more guards with all the noise, or you can do it properly and silence them with one swift strike.

The way to kill efficiently is to sit unobserved a good distance away, watching and waiting until the guard turns his back on you. Most guards are pretty dumb, so if you get up onto a rooftop or simply crouch on the ground, they are far less likely to see you. When you hack into someone who is unaware of your presence, they will die quickly and quietly, with much blood spewing forth from their new orifice.

Patience, Grasshopper!

If there's one thing this game teaches, it's that being sneaky is a good thing, especially when it's a forty-to-one affair. Fighting with a guard who hates your guts can take ages, attract unwanted attention, and become rather messy. Killing a guard who doesn't even know you exist is a lot easier. There are three good

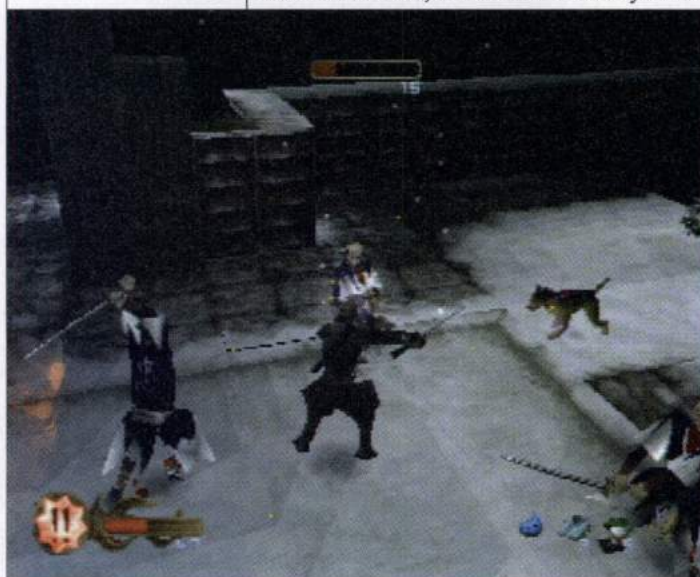
ways to kill instantly with the guy and the girl - from behind, from in front, and facing backwards. Yes they are shifty, and very satisfying.

Luckily, there is a Training mode in which newcomers get to hone their stealth skills until they can pass for a shadow in the middle of the night. Even the training is not easy, though. For the instructor to give you any kind of congratulation or complement, you must pass the Training stage with no detected kills and without being spotted. If you don't, they pay you out and call you crap.

This title really rocks its genre - the genre where you kill everything that moves - simply because you can't just run around like a buffoon slaying stuff. It is unrealistic to think that one person could take on that many others with just a sword to save them. The thought, strategy and patience involved lift this title high above all other games that have ever had ninjas in them.

Whatever it takes

It gets deeper though, taking into consideration the many devices that you may use during your mission. These include poisoned rice to temporarily paralyse whoever



Look out! It's a dog!



Tenchu presents you with the ability to be stealthful, i.e. you can creep up behind dudes and take them out before they even know your there. Kind of like those guys in kung-foo.



BY: GT INTERACTIVE

PRICE: \$89.95

PLAYERS: ONE

ACCESSORIES: MEMORY CARD

CLASSIFICATION: M

It's "The Shit is bleeding Show" Yes! You can have, at your fingertips, the power to spill more blood than Hollywood blockbuster. And not only with brutal power, but style and grace as well.

eats it, mines and grenades for the explosive kill, smoke bombs to create chaos and confusion, shuriken to throw at the enemy, health vials to fully fix you up, and caltrops to injure your pursuers.

Most levels have no set path, but the mission objective is always clear, and usually involves assassinating a key figure (and his entire bodyguard). If you complete a mission you get a rating. If you score 'Thug' it means you're a loser with no restraint or patience, whereas if you achieve 'Grand Master' status, you receive a special item.

There's your incentive. Each stage has a special item, even the Training mode. These items are better than the regular ones. One lets you breathe fire, one gives you a guard dog which fights with you, one lets you wear cool ninja armour, one creates a decoy to detract attention, and another induces sleep. All up there are eleven specials to earn.

The bosses are always terrifying, and not as regular or conventional as most bosses these days. That is, not every stage has one. When you find the minister in the stage called "Execute the Corrupt Minister", he commits hara kiri, so you don't need to fight him. Their voice characterization is worth a mention too. It is still odd, however, that everyone in the whole game speaks with a hefty Japanese accent, while the hero and heroine speak fluent American.

Honourable intentions

"Tenchu: Stealth Assassins" is the first of its kind, and unique for many reasons. It is highly strategic, quite bloody, thoroughly immersive and extremely suspenseful. It may well be the most

addictive game I've ever played. Having finished it still doesn't prevent me from losing more precious hours' sleep to its irresistible playability.

True, it may not be for everyone. If you lack patience with games, or have no interest in murdering security guards, you might not enjoy Stealth Assassins. On the other hand, you could enjoy it at a more basic level - you don't actually have to kill most of the guards to finish each level. There's violence for those who want it, and a more cranial game at the heart of it.

All in all, I doubt that there's a PlayStation owner out there who would disapprove of such an innovative game like this coming out, (though maybe some of their parents would). Try it and buy it, as soon as you can.



More than meets the eye, Tenchu is a far more intelligent game that it appears and will satisfy those after more than the usual hack 'n' slash



Internal combustion is a problem around these parts.



An ambush like this is good form.

Are his eyes bleeding? He must have been playing Wipeout 2097.

Ghost in the Shell

Anime has always been a strong influence in video games, neo here's a game that does it's celluloid inspiration justice



Ghost in the Shell is the ultimate in action games.

It looks like a cranky ladybug.

As a new member of special forces Section 9 under Major Kusanagi's command, you're on the trail of a terrorist code named Zevura 27. Controlling a Fuchikoma, a small but heavily armed and super agile insect-like tank, you must blast your way through 12 levels starting at the bayside, through the sewer networks, highways and buildings of the city, to end with the climactic showdown at the top of the Aeropolis II tower.

The Fuchikoma handles like no other piece of mecha and can cling to virtually any surface like a spider. Outdoors you can speed along the ground, reach the side of a building, effortlessly scale its side walls, then leap off the roof to cling onto adjacent structures within jumping range. In tunnels you can manoeuvre around the walls and ceiling to evade enemy fire. With wheels on its 'feet' it can dash around in all directions, even continuously strafe around enemies while firing everything you've got at them! Armaments comprise of a gatling gun, multiple missile launcher (fired by keeping your finger on the fire button until targets lock-on) and grenades.

Anime Action

The graphics will blow you away! The detailing is immaculate, from the build-

ings and environments right down to splashes when Fuchikoma speeds through water. Shirow's mecha designs range from small missile-launching pods, attack helicopters, wall climbers to huge beam-turrets and end of level bosses, which will certainly please fans. There are some cool special effects too, like thermoptic camouflage used by the first boss and a combat cyborg. In the latter's case you'll have a brief battle before it shimmers, disappears and runs off to another section of the old city where you must intercept it for another round of combat.

The controls are easy to learn and the game is hugely addictive. The Fuchikoma's unique abilities literally put a new slant on the shooter as you can fire up into the underbelly of airborne enemies while clinging on to the side of a building. Leaping from structures to cling onto another gives a rush, and the handling during high speed combat is the smoothest I've experienced in any 3D mecha game of late. It has a slight graphical and aural edge over Armoured Core, but there isn't quite as much depth in the gameplay and no customisable parts department. However, by eschewing the simulation side of things, the action is much more immediate and leans more towards a pure arcade-style blast-fest.

Unfortunately Ghost in the Shell's bad guys aren't exactly the smartest around; even the bosses' attack patterns can be figured out pretty easily. So the game, at a mere 12 levels, can be completed in a flash. But while it lasts, you'll be having a great time! Actually, I found the challenge to be quite erratic; once accustomed to the controls, the first two levels were easy. But the third - a knuckle shredding mine-sweep against the clock - made me want to tear my hair out! Strangely, many of the later levels I completed on first try! It's not a bad thing, but their order - if you're going by the difficulty curve - felt a bit out of sequence. The overall attention to detail is excellent, but some enemies nevertheless tend to blend into the

The FMV's at the start

explain the game in

typical anime style.



Fire goddamn you! Fire!

backgrounds due to muddy colour schemes. Then again, I guess that's the camouflage.

Perfect for blasting

In the tradition of shooting games, each level usually has items to collect, an end of level boss as well as shield and grenade pickups scattered around the level. Usually you're able to wander freely within the mission environment to its perimeter, but two levels running 'on rails' along the ocean and the highway have limited steering control. It's a high speed chase and you have to survive the myriad attacks from

enemies racing alongside before reaching the boss!

Like videogames based on Hollywood films, there are plenty of badly executed anime/manga based games from Japan. Fortunately, Ghost in the Shell isn't one of them. Granted, the sheer wealth of the concepts and world view of the original work could have spawned a much more complex style of game, but the decision to work within the shooting genre have yielded a fantastic result. Needless to say, if you're a fan of Shirow's work, you should stop reading and rush out to buy the game as soon as it's available. The animated scenes are

excellent - it's like having a stand alone mini-feature bundled with the game; the replay theatre lets you see them at anytime too - I sure wish more games such an option! The presentation is one of the best around and the action will appeal beyond its core fan audience. So should mecha fans get this or Armoured Core? Being able to buy and customise mecha parts in AC was way cool, but I preferred Ghost in the Shell's no fuss shooting, Fuchikoma's agility, and the overall feel of the game. While it can be finished rather quickly like Ace Combat 2, it's nevertheless a great shooter you must check out.

BY: SONY

PRICE: \$79.95

PLAYERS: ONE

ACCESSORIES: MEMORY CARD

DUAL SHOCK

CLASSIFICATION: M



Of course, it's sensible to get out of the way of enemy fire.



Looks like a cheesy 70's special effect.



In Ghost in the Shell there's plenty of different enemies to attack, but they have this annoying tendency to attack back. Bastards!

Resident Evil 2

When does a game become more than a game? When it consumes your life, as this one will when you find yourself playing it at 3am

When there's no more room in hell, the dead will walk the earth.' That's what the 80s zombie classic Dawn of the Dead said anyway. Hell's an awfully big place if you ask me, so it takes a little science to bring back the dead if you're keen. Something called a T-Virus, in fact. Engineered by the Umbrella Corporation and set loose in a mansion on the outskirts of Raccoon City, the ensuing outbreak of genetic abominations were taken care of by Resident Evil's S.T.A.R.S. team. Months later Umbrella are still up to no good; the new creatures borne from their new G-Virus makes the old lot look like Snoopy - and this time they've taken over the city!

More gore than before

Resident Evil 2 is the A-grade sequel to the previously terrifying but nevertheless B-movie horror fest. You can tell straight away: the cheesy live action intro is replaced by a mind blowing CG movie sequence. The game comes on two discs: one for Leon Kennedy, the rookie cop driving into town to serve his first day and the other for Claire Redfield, in search of her brother Chris - S.T.A.R.S. member from the first game. The intros are set in the same time frame but focuses on each character as they enter the city. Getting a very enthusiastic welcome from the undead after a bit of fresh meat, the fleeing duo cross paths and take off in a patrol car. But in no time they're met the front end of a petrol tanker set on a collision course! Separated by the burning wreck, Leon and Claire have to make their way to the police building alone. It's the only safe place in town, right?

Not only is the presentation slicker, the graphics have also been upped a notch or two. All the characters from the heroes to the freaks are more intricately detailed and lightsourced. The main characters now constantly keep their eyes on any creatures nearby and react after sustaining damage; when they're hobbling at a snail's pace you'd better find some medicine quick! Backgrounds are stunningly photo realistic with better 'horror movie camera angles' that often paralyse you in fear of what lies ahead of you. In addition to the 'waterfall' effects there's a little more animation like a spinning fan in an office, revolving clock gears or steam emanating from pipes in industrial areas.

The ambient sound effects and music create an even more foreboding atmosphere

than the previous game. Subtle sounds include glass or debris crunching under your feet and different footsteps sounds depending on the room's floor surface, whether it be a solid thunk of metal grates or creaking wood. Zombie moans, shuffling undead feet and other creature noises are spine chilling as always, but best of all, there's now more sudden load shocks guaranteed to make you scream and jump out of your chair - I certainly did a that a lot! For maximum enjoyment folks, really crank up the volume!

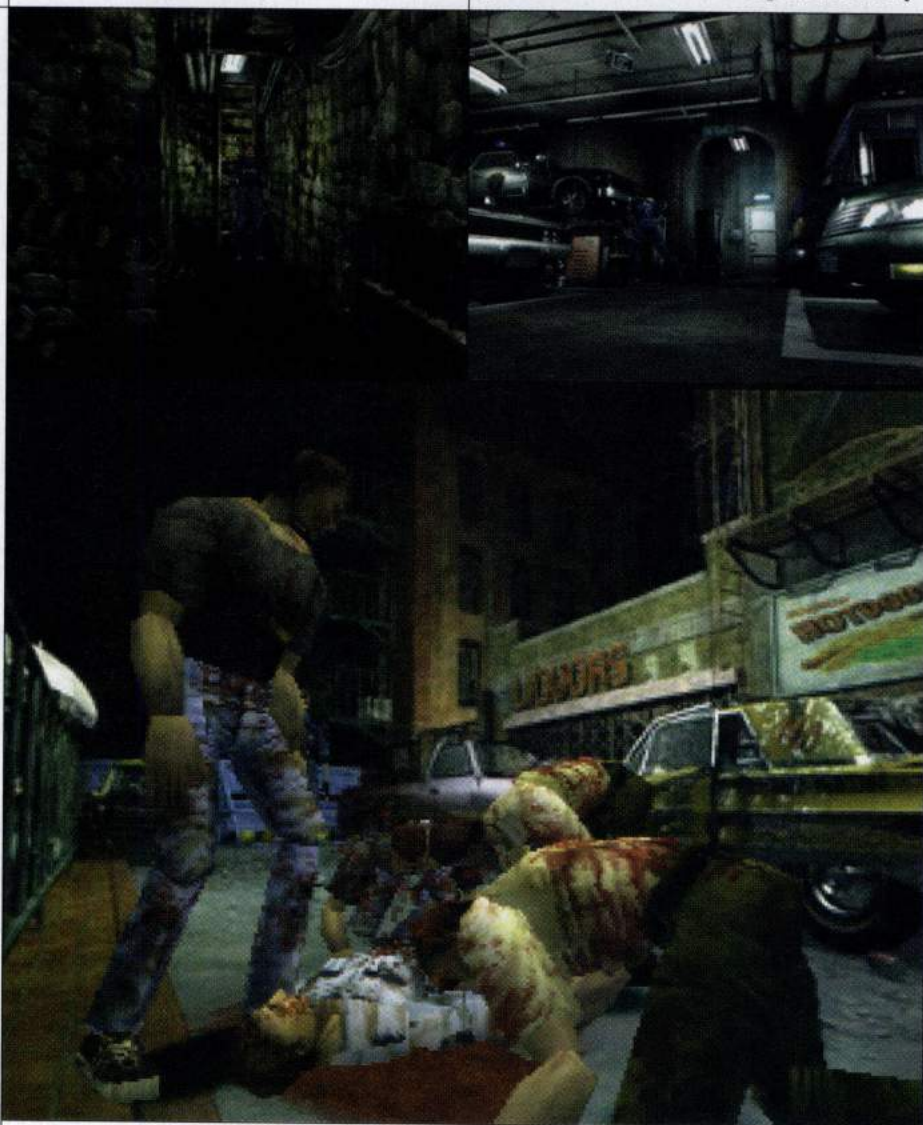
Terrifying fun

Resident Evil 2 is the most terrifying experience in any horror medium of late. Seriously folks, I thought Scream 2 had

some great moments when I saw it a while back, but it doesn't even touch the terror of this game! It supersedes the original not only in suspense and presentation (watch out for an awesome movie FMV half way through the first scenario and ending sequences that'll blow your socks off), but also in the script and voice acting. Sure there's still a few unintentionally funny moments, but the characters actually give a decent performance this time around. Being able to play the game from the two characters point of view during the same timeframe is perhaps the most significant improvement to gameplay. Consequently there's much more variation in the story compared to the original and you're compelled to play the discs in all possible combinations to experience every



The intro is scary!!



Man the cops in this town suck!

facet of the night of terror in Raccoon City, not to mention the different endings. The supporting cast also differs slightly; Leon teams up with Ada Wong while Claire, like Ripely from Aliens, shares her adventure with Sherry.

Brilliant a game as it is, Resident Evil 2 isn't quite flawless. Dead bodies still disappear when you reenter a room where creatures have been slayed but apart from that, graphic faults are so minor I'd be picking hairs. The new auto aiming option is useful against single enemies (you spin around and lock your aim in one smooth action), but it's a nightmare when you're surrounded, so change the options according to your situation. In terms of difficulty, the puzzle elements are much easier to solve. Even the bosses

aren't as tough this time around (once you get used to their attack patterns), so each character's scenario doesn't take that long to complete - and this was on the normal difficulty setting! In some ways I wished each disc would last longer, but conversely the resulting game is faster paced - playing even more like a movie than its predecessor - with less periods of backtracking and wandering around while you're stuck on a puzzle. The emphasis in this game is terror. The shocks still get you the next time around and scenarios are definitely worth replaying, especially to achieve higher end-of-game-rankings to get all the hidden extras. The less you save maximises your ranking on completion, and apparently upon finishing without a save

unlocks a big bonus; it's a game of survival horror indeed. Bloodier and scarier, Resident Evil 2 is an excellent sequel essential for any horror fan.



If you lament that horror movies just aren't as frightening as they use to be, try Resident Evil 2. Your blood will freeze

BY: CAPCOM

PRICE: \$89.95

PLAYERS: ONE

ACCESSORIES: MEMORY CARD

CLASSIFICATION: MA15+

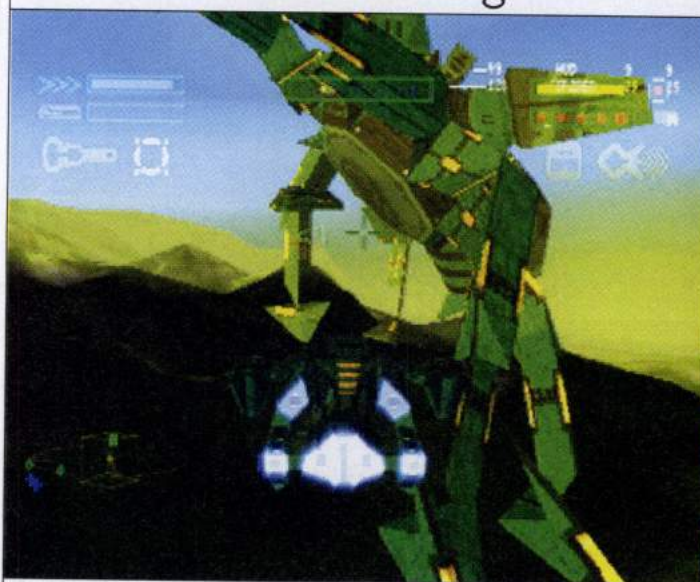


That's a face that only a mother could love....I think.

Eat lead you scum sucking Zombies!

Colony Wars: Vengeance

If you hunger for the taste of a real space adventure, Colony Wars Vengeance has everything you want



Great green gobs of gundam.



In cockpit view of mass destruction.

When Psygnosis' original Colony Wars title appeared a little over a year ago, it was instantly well received due to the considerable void it managed to fill. Firstly, it brought satisfaction to the PSX owners who'd spent months with their noses pressed up against the local PC store's window, lamenting the fact that the closest PSX owners could get to a game like X-wing vs Tie Fighter was the execrable Wing Commander series. It also managed to placate those who rued the lack of a decent flight sim.

Fans of the first game will be pleased to see that Colony Wars Vengeance has taken a lot from the original, but has incorporated major renovations across the board in terms of production, gameplay and general standards.

53 missions, 19 acts, 6 endings

As in the first game, action in CWV is spread over a large number of missions (53 in

total) that are separated into 19 acts with six different endings depending on your success. This ending structure was one of the best parts of the first game and it's good to see it make a return here, as it means that even if you're completely useless you'll be able to get through half a dozen missions before your progress is terminated. Conversely, skilful players will find themselves having to fail missions at strategic points in the game if they wish to see all the missions that CWV has on offer.

The overall style of the missions has been given a bit of a tweaking for the sequel, and missions in CWV cover a wide range of objectives. As well as the simple escort or search and destroy missions, there are also some

sub-orbital missions, some mining missions and some covert and espionage missions relying more on stealth than merely wandering in, lasers burning. This variety of objectives, when combined with CWV's involving plot, ensures your total immersion in the whole game scenario. It also helps to distance CWV from the simple "cross-hairs in space" style of too many older space combat titles.

Smoother motion, more control

At this point, people familiar with the first game might be thinking that this sequel doesn't really sound any different from the first, and in terms of basic objectives and style of play they'd be pretty much correct.



Ooh... nice sequence. Take that sucker out Then take out all his friends.

However, where CWV steps up is in the major renovations to the general production and control.

Graphically, CWV is instantly familiar to anyone who saw even a preview of its prequel, yet the attention to detail has been vastly improved. There are still the same choices of viewpoint (two cockpit views plus a third-person 'chase' cam) and many other obvious similarities, but the differences really stand out. No longer do all the ships have that seamy, jagged look. There is much smoother rendering on all the crafts, although to be fair, some of the larger gunships and transports still appear a little blocky. Greatly improved though, is the motion of all crafts (particularly your own) and the whole thing in general runs a lot more smoothly than the first game.

One thing missing from the first game is those cool hemisphere explosions when you destroy an enemy, but fans of large explosions should not fear as they have been replaced with even larger scenes of destruction. In the end though, it's these graphic improvements which do the most to promote CWV's cause, and after a while of playing with enemy fighters zipping over your head while you navigate through tumbling aster-

oids and clouds of debris, it's very, very easy to get completely immersed in the action.

Feel the noise

Even though, technically speaking, violent dogfights in the vacuum of space would be a silent affair, Psygnosis have fortunately thumbed their noses at science and delivered a fine soundtrack. Subtle atmospheric music throughout helps provide the cinematic quality inherent in CWV, and the effects are very tasty indeed. By far the most significant change between the two games, however, is the renovation of the control and handling of your various craft. In the first game, control was extremely twitchy, and it made precise handling and accurate targeting quite difficult. This particularly affected analog control, making it a constant case of over compensation to make up for the lack of inertia. In CWV, however, the control has been severely tweaked, with a better sense of inertia and a far more intuitive sense of control. This makes it far easier to do any sort of precise flying, and generally just makes the game more fun. The motion of your craft still seems a little sluggish, but the thrust has a more realistic feel to it than the original, thus giv-



When you get hit you see red. That's not to say

you get angry, you just see red.

BY: PSYGNOSIS

PRICE: \$89.95

PLAYERS: ONE

ACCESSORIES: MEMORY CARD

DUAL SHOCK

CLASSIFICATION: G8



I think she's gonna blow!



Plenty of space shootin' lazer action. The explosions are big (in a vacume?) and

the ships all look pretty cool.

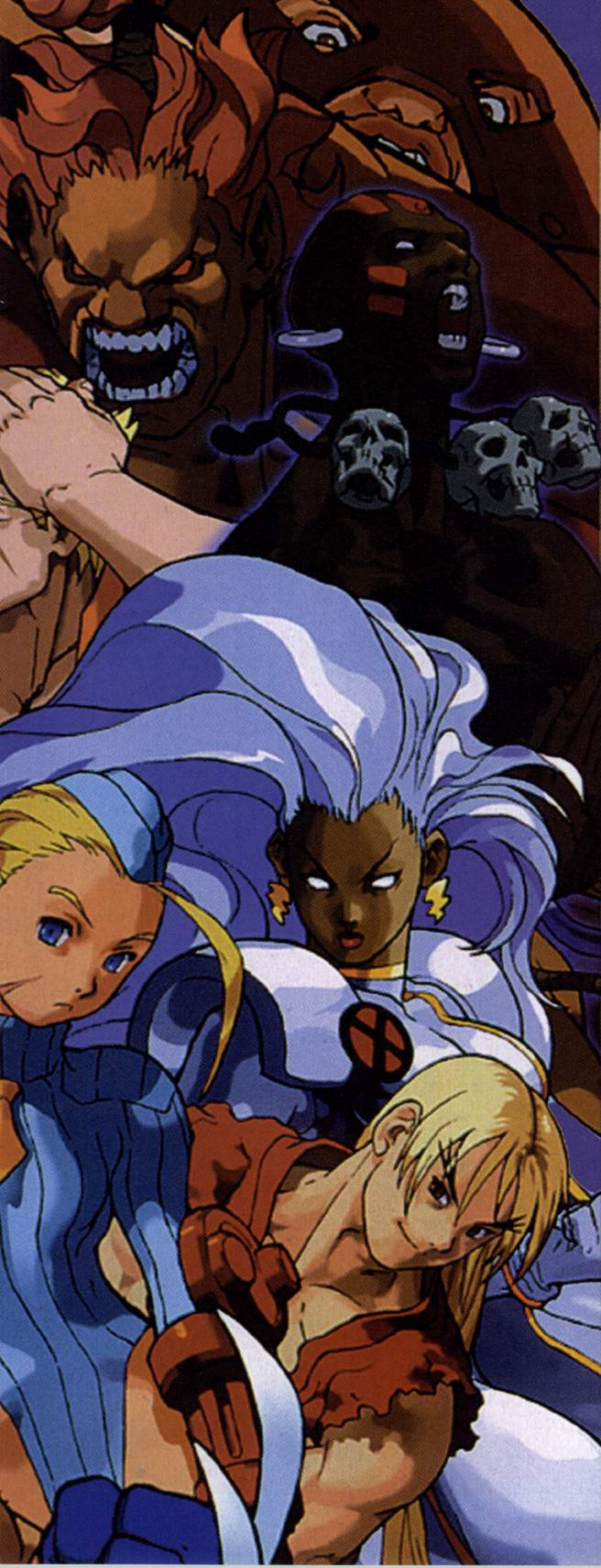
ing it a more realistic sense of motion (as far as my knowledge of astrophysics is concerned anyway).

As with the original title, truly mastering the game will take some time (and work), but due to the introductory nature of the first few levels, it's pretty easy for almost anyone to jump on and start blasting. In the end, CWV is a very enticing title, with its dedication to production slickness and entertaining gameplay. It's a game that will also definitely take some time to beat, with some of the later missions being truly brutal, yet high replay value and gentle early levels should make it appealing to a wide range of people.



A vast improvement on the original and strongly recommended for fans and newcomers alike.





Fighting Games

So, you think you're the best, do you? Let's see how you fare one-on-one against the toughest opponents the PlayStation has to offer! Be it the wildly animated 2D beat 'em ups stemming from Street Fighter or the new breed of 3D fighter honed to perfection in Tekken 3, prepare to be punched, kicked and generally dismembered into the next dimension.



70 TEKKEN 3



74 MORTAL KOMBAT 4



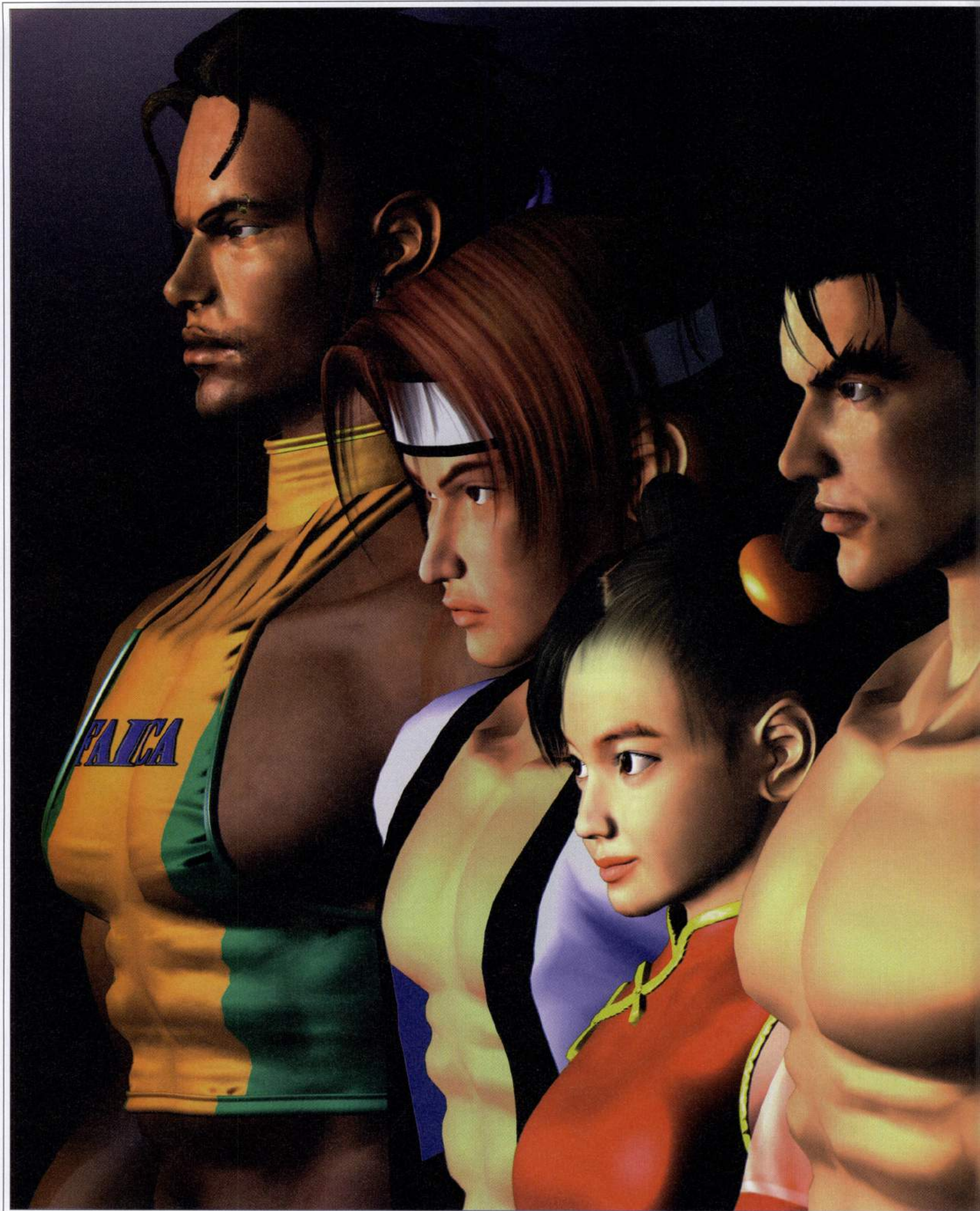
76 DEAD OR ALIVE



78 X-MEN VS STREET FIGHTER



80 BUSHIDO BLADE



Tekken 3

It's big, it's bad and it rocks bloody well hard.

Tekken is the mother of all fighting games

Tekken 3 is Namco's highly anticipated blockbuster game of the year. Indeed, in keeping with the latest vernacular of the film world, perhaps it should be referred to not as a 'game', but an 'Event'. And why not? After all, its developer is regarded as one of the world's best.

Despite some heavy competition after its release, Tekken 2 remained the fan favourite fighting game on the PlayStation. In creating the sequel, Namco has packed in some innovative extra features, upping the ante for any other potential contenders for the crown. Like the Event movie, with favourable industry buzz and loyal fan support, not to mention the 'teaser' at the arcades, Tekken 3's success has been virtually assured, even before it hits the shop shelves.

Superb

Graphically it's superb; the character modelling makes Tekken 2's look like preliminary rough concepts! Sporting higher detail and a much smoother appearance as well as the de rigueur light sourcing, it's like comparing the CG modelling of 80s movie *The Last Starfighter* to those in *The Fifth Element*.

T3's cast is as large as ever, with a total of 21 challengers. In the past we've had fighting bears and raptors, but perhaps the most bizarre character yet has been introduced: a midget orange dinosaur with a lethal fart attack called Gon! In tradition, you only start with 10 characters and must win the others.

While the backgrounds fail to retain the arcade version's polygon elements, a quasi 3D feel has been achieved by wrapping the detailed background art around the 'arena walls,' as opposed to being a flat scrolling piece of artwork of the first two games. Some stages benefit from this effect more than others. Only an arcade purist will have cause for complaint, but there's no doubt about it: Tekken has never looked better on the PlayStation.

Sound effects are up to Namco's chunky standards. The Tekken series to my mind have always sported the most satisfying sound effects for connecting blows and the bone crunches are second to none in getting a cringe out of players and spectators alike.

One of Tekken 2's greatest strengths was its diverse and musically rich soundtrack, each character's music was distinctly different in its own style and texture, yet none of this is apparent in Tekken 3, where almost every track is evident in its attempt to emulate 'Hardcore' techno.

But for a truly brutal effect, may I suggest disabling the music all together and cranking up the volume!

Maximum damage

The gameplay hasn't really changed that much since the last game. Tekken 3 is all about mastering

those combo chains and air juggles; inflicting a maximum amount of damage without missing a beat is the name of the game. Sure, you can play defensively, but I doubt many hard core fans would find joy in that.

As you'd expect, there's a bunch of new moves for the old characters. Ones that immediately come to mind are Heihachi's bolt palm (which looks like a Street Fighter 'Ha-Do-Ken' without the fireball) and Nina/Anna's crotch kick - that's gotta hurt! Due to the faster frame rate and subtle differences in how some characters' moves have been tweaked, you'll need a bit of time to adjust to the new feel.

The most important gameplay addition gives T3 more depth in terms of defense strategy. Now you can sidestep attacks (like in *Soul Blade*) to set up your counter attack or execute an impressive side-throw as you avoid your opponent.

Let's play ball!

As before, there's the usual assortment of game modes like vs, survival, practice and team battle. Namco have always been very good with extra stuff on their arcade conversions, and this time round there's a few interesting additions.

One of them is called Tekken Ball. Is it something like that brutal sport on skates depicted in the movie *Rollerball*? Well, not exactly. I don't know whether the idea of having the rock 'ard Tekken cast playing volleyball is inspired or stupid, but its sure damn funny!

After choosing from three balls which inflict varying degrees of damage, you can opt to challenge the computer or a friend. A power hit on the ball will charge it up, knocking opponents flat upon contact, but it can be countered. Players can manoeuvre freely within their half of the court, and the game really gets interesting when both are near the dividing line. For while the ball is airborne, you're free attack your challenger or even grab and throw them - just make sure the ball doesn't hit the court behind you! Tekken Ball is simply great fun; it will have you in fits, especially against a friend.

Tekken Force Mode is a four stage side-scrolling beat em up in the style of *Final Fight* or *Streets of Rage*. Each stage consists of waves of attacking thugs from either side of the screen, to end with the boss confrontation. It's pretty white knuckle, as you're racing against the clock to complete the stage. Time bonuses gained whenever you dispense of a thug provide some relief. Occasionally you'll find a life replenishing roast turkey lying around, but sadly there are no lead pipes or broken bottles to find and use on your foes.

Tekken Force, while intense, suffers from a few control problems. Getting your character to move vertically is a real pain, especially when you want to get those health pickups. As the controls are the same as in the arcade modes, you end up

BY: NAMCO

PRICE: \$89.95

PLAYERS: ONE OR TWO

ACCESSORIES: MEMORY CARD

DUAL SHOCK

CLASSIFICATION: M15+



The FMV for Tekken 3

is extra nice

shuffling up and down the screen like an old man. It's very frustrating when you want to dash and restore your strength before the next wave of thugs arrive. Sometimes you'll end up challenging them at the very edge of the screen as you move to the next. It puts you in an unfair disadvantage as they can see you and get in some cheap shots, while you're striking blindly! Finally, while facing off opponents on both sides, your character will automatically turn if the thug behind you gets too close; it may sound like no big deal, but it can annoy and confuse during the heat of battle.

Popcorn and Choc-Tops

The Theatre Mode lets you do what you've always wanted to do in regards to FMV cut scenes, watch them again whenever you want. The bonus is that upon winning and storing all the end sequences, you can also pop in your T2 disc and watch its FMV at your leisure. Every cut scene intensive game should have this feature!

As you'd expect, the CG opening is up to Namco's high standards, though not quite as epic or long as Soul Blade's intro to my mind. Ending movies are typically humorous - especially Panda and Kuma's. On the whole all they're all good. Short, but very sweet.

Still The King?

If you're a Tekken fan, the latest installment is a must buy. There's no way that you'll be able to bear the chunkiness of T2 after getting your hands on this game. As a complete package, the two extra sub games extend the title's enjoyment factor considerably.

Whether Tekken 3 is the last word in polygon fighting games depends on your taste. Graphically it's amongst



Hwoarang shows off his new cheer leading pom-poms.

the best, although to my mind Dead or Alive and Tobal 2's character modelling have a marginally crisper edge. The latter also features some polygon background elements too, but in the end they don't make or break a game.

With two enjoyable and different mini-games thrown in on top of the usual goodies, it's commendable for Namco to have done something different in regards to new modes. Ultimately it's the preference of fighting style that's the determining factor.

T3 certainly feels the most brutal, with the characters possessing some of the flashiest and most painful looking moves around. The shaking feature provided by the dual shock pad certainly enhances the sensation.

The offensive, combo-intensive nature of the gameplay can feel somewhat mechanical. Get each character's sequence right and you're just about invincible against less experienced players. Granted, leaning

the buttons and air juggle timing is no mean feat. It's the aim of the serious fan after all. And once mastered, it's damn satisfying!

No Substitute

But not everyone's a combo fanatic, nor do they want to simply knock opponents out in a flash. While the sidestep feature and extra moves undoubtedly enhance the gameplay, it doesn't really revolutionise it because Tekken 3 is still bound by the limitations of the fighting system. I can't help but feel that this 'not-quite 3D movement' has just about reached its end. Especially in the light of what Tobal 2, my personal favourite fighting game, has achieved with its superb interface and total freedom of movement.

But raw fighting power is what Tekken 3 is all about, and if brutal, powerful moves and lethal combo



Watch out for Heihachi Mishima. He will

kick your ass and he wont even build

up a sweat.

chains are what you want, there is no substitute. It's a slick, highly polished title you'd come to expect from Namco. If you liked the other two, there's no cause for hesitation: buy Tekken 3 now.

★★★★★

Faster, better looking and meaner than before, Tekken 3 is the series at its finest



The camer angles zoom in, out and pan around to create a dynamic cinematic feel for the game.



Yes, that is a beach ball. Tekken Ball mode adds an extra dimension to the gameplay.

Tekken Force mode is a retro-style side scrolling beat 'em up.



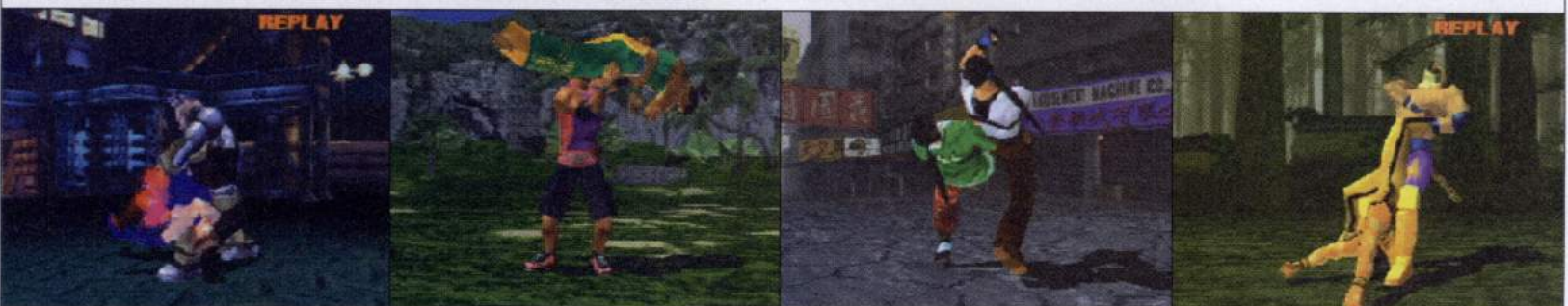
When fighting the boss, Real Ogre, (ugly monster-like dude pictured) be sure to wear your fire-proof clothing.



There are plenty of secret characters to unlock and play with, including a panda bear and a midget cartoon dragon called Gon.



The flashes of colour and light around impact areas add to the overall graphical power of Tekken 3



The throws in Tekken 3 are far more complex than in any other game. With some characters you have the ability to add extra moves to the end of a single throw.

Mortal Kombat 4

You may have thought the Mortal Kombat games were an extinct breed, but here's the latest in the long line of carnage

When we previewed this one back in issue 12, we kind of jabbered on a bit about how good it was, even going so far as to say that it looks better than Tekken 3. This was because of the high hopes raised by the teaser that has been playing in arcades across Australia. The arcade version does indeed look bloody beautiful, with particularly splendid detail on the Kombatants' faces, even if it does run at a frame rate far too fast for most people to play it with any confidence.

Alive and still kicking

Unfortunately though, this very eagerly awaited 3D sequel to a 2D trilogy appears to

have suffered from its domestication. It's nothing so bad as to tarnish the title's reputation as a frantically violent fighter. But the characters are just a little smaller, their faces just a little rougher, and the polygon overlap just a little more frequent than in the coin-op versions I've seen.

However, this is still Mortal Kombat right down to the bone marrow, and Midway has saved everything that matters - gore, fatalities, and, um... more gore.

It still runs blisteringly fast, easily as fast as its fastest prequel and perhaps too fast for some (say, my brothers whom I love... to bludgeon). Although it has been reanimated into the third dimension, it still fully retains the look and feel of the first three games.

Midway must be commended for so convincingly incarnating their previously photographic characters. All those years of compiling those pictures must have paid off, because the present polygonal characters capture the healthy human figure very well, even if they do move somewhat robotically.

The basics of play

There is Arcade Mode, where a single player must choose their destiny - you pick a path of bad guys to beat ranging from novice to master - or another player can challenge at any time, making up for the Vs. Mode found in most other games of this type.

In Arcade Mode, you choose to fight one-on-one or in pairs. Sadly, in the latter option, all four fighters never appear on the screen at once. Instead, the second guy jumps in to finish the fight when the first gets knocked off.

Then there's Team, Endurance and Tournament Modes. These obligatory options do little to enhance the gameplay in any respectable way, unlike Tekken 3's innovative Ball game and Force mode. Team is similar to the pairing option with more characters. Endurance is your regular sur-



MK4 has weapons for you to kill with.

vival mode where you try to kill as many opponents as possible on a single bar of health. Tournament Mode is for up to eight people, arranged as a round robin.

Basic pain

Basically, MK4 is remarkably similar to MK3. The only generic addition to the underlying controls is the sidestep, which only serves to avoid projectiles.

Combination attacks with fists and feet are still there, but they have been pruned dramatically to return the emphasis to each fighter's special moves. Reappearing kombatants, like Liu Kang and Scorpion, have lost their longer combos. Instead, everyone



Funky dico outfits.



Goro can squeeze the beer out of a sealed keg. Imagine what he could do to your body!





Plenty of tomato sauce here.



has roughly the same set of attacks, the longest of which is a mere four hits long.

These attacks do a maximum of 23% damage, but by adding special moves inside the combos, you can pulverize for up to 40% satisfaction. If any more than 40% damage is done, the aggressor is knocked back and the words MAXIMUM DAMAGE! appear on the screen.

The sweep and roundhouse kicks are still there for all fighters, and of course the uppercut still rules triumphant as king of the one-hitters. Each character now has two throws instead of just the one, which is nice, but yet not good enough to keep interest levels high. Not only are they ridiculously unrealistic, they cannot be countered in any way. Come to think of it, nothing in the game is reversible. I suspect Midway hoped that the gore would sell it for them, so they didn't need to waste time programming more strategic options into their fighting engine. How sad is the truth of it all...

The tragedy of devolution

All up, this title could have been better. When it comes to the grunt, it has plenty, but

when it comes to articulate speech, there's not much I can say in MK4's favour. So far, the original Mortal Kombat has been the most realistic of the lot. With the blood turned on in MK4, there's simply too much of it to even make out your foe as you beat them up, but if you turn it off, what's the point?

You could buy it to sicken your rels by ripping off someone's arms or squeezing them until their head pops off like a cork from a champagne bottle, or you could get Tekken 3 or Bushido Blade for a more thoughtful fight. Most young male gamers will love it for a week, but it'll only take that long for its limitations to start rearing their ugly heads.

It has pluses and minuses, but the pluses are so thoroughly based on blood that the minuses seem more important after a while. However, if you still love the other MKs all these years on, don't hesitate, for it's as good as they ever were, if not much better.



A high-production piece, this one's only for those sick little monkeys who have more than just a fetish for blood.



hmm... plenty of sauce here too...



The old fatalities are still in there, providing a gory ending to each battle. There is also a training mode to help you master them, so now you can be proficient at slaughtering all your friends.

BY: MIDWAY

PRICE: \$89.95

PLAYERS: ONE OR TWO

ACCESSORIES: MEMORY CARD

CLASSIFICATION: MA15+

Dead or Alive

Here's a beat em up populated by beautiful men and women who represent the pinical of human evolution

You can just tell that this is going to be a great game, at least for a while, enjoying a brief spate of success before fading into relative obscurity as the massive juggernaut that is Tekken 3 rears its well rendered head around the corner. The sad thing is that Dead Or Alive does have a lot of potential, maybe even greater than Tekken 3, but as it stands, suffers from a few minor faults that stop it from being truly great.

Tecmo has combined the best parts of Virtua Fighter and Tekken into Dead or Alive and it shows. When released in the arcades, it was mostly overlooked because the game seemed like a cheap Virtua Fighter knock-off. Things couldn't be further from the truth. Unlike the continuing Tekken and Virtua Fighter series, Dead Or Alive is a true breath of fresh air in the 3D fighting genre. Instead of the usual attack-and-defend-with-an-occasional-throw type routine of most fighting games, Dead Or Alive has taken the reversal idea and pumped it up into the nth degree integrating holds and reversals as an essential part of the game, while setting up a new benchmark in 3D fighting games alone.

The controls are somewhat different from what we're used to. There are three

buttons which are hold, punch and kick respectively. Most combos are fairly VF style, most of which start with a few punches and a kick, but now with a flick of a hold button you can truly punish the button smashing/machine gun combo freak by catching his arm or leg during one of the numerous hits and reverse it, either going into a throw, beating or pushing them back, either way giving you the opportunity to launch into your own offense.

It's quite easy to spot the difference between the arcade game and the PlayStation version. Gone are the 3D backgrounds of the arcade, replaced by some rather dull, but functional wrap-around 2D ones, just like those seen in Tekken 2. The floors are now textured, so that you can now fight on snow, concrete or wood. However the fighters themselves seem to have gotten the works. They've all gotten the gouraud shading job which has made every character a lot smoother and human looking, with texture mapping and excellent light sourcing effects employed to great effect, and if that wasn't already enough, all the characters move at a blistering 50 frames per second! The downside is, of course, that while the characters move extremely flu-

idly, they still don't feel as realistic as those in Tekken 3, but nonetheless look great anyway.

End Game

In the end, I was impressed by some things but there was an overall lacking feeling in the final production. There is a notable absence of any FMV or CG endings whatsoever, when you finish the game, you are presented with the credits screen for all your hard work, and after the magnificent CG intro, you really feel cheated because they could have been really good. Overall, Dead Or Alive just doesn't have that polished feeling that the Namco games have. The developers have done their best with the presentation and it shows. They've tried to spice up the standard fighting game formulas with a tournament instead of a single-player mode, next fighter is replaced with 'next card' and the 'popularity rate' is based on how many times that character has been chosen (it depends on whether or not you've saved it on to memory card), but it does emulate the standard martial arts tournament. Survival mode has gotten a bit boring so they've added a 'Kumite' mode, which allows you to fight a minimum of 30,



Dudes with attitude.

The dead or Alive FMV.



There are a few different ways to take your opponent out: you can just hit and kick them untill they fall down (as above), you can hit and kick them untill they step out of the ring (top right) or, you can buy them dinner and a movie (not pictured).



BY: SONY

PRICE: \$69.95

PLAYERS: ONE OR TWO

ACCESSORIES: MEMORY CARD

DUAL SHOCK

CLASSIFICATION: M

Crisp polygons, bright colours, smooth movement, bouncing boobs... This game has all the elements you need for a modern fighting game

blockbuster. Especially the boobs...

up to 150, opponents at a time, with the aim of trying to get the best record. Personally I doubt many people will have the time, let alone the interest or patience to sit down and play it through. After all the attempts at presentation, the game still has a very Japanese flavour to it, which can be discouraging for some.

For the gameplay nuts however, this is probably what Virtua Fighter would look like on the PlayStation, this might actually be the game that you'll find yourself coming back to after Tekken 3 - the fighting system itself is actually fairly in-depth, and the learning curve is definitely more rewarding,

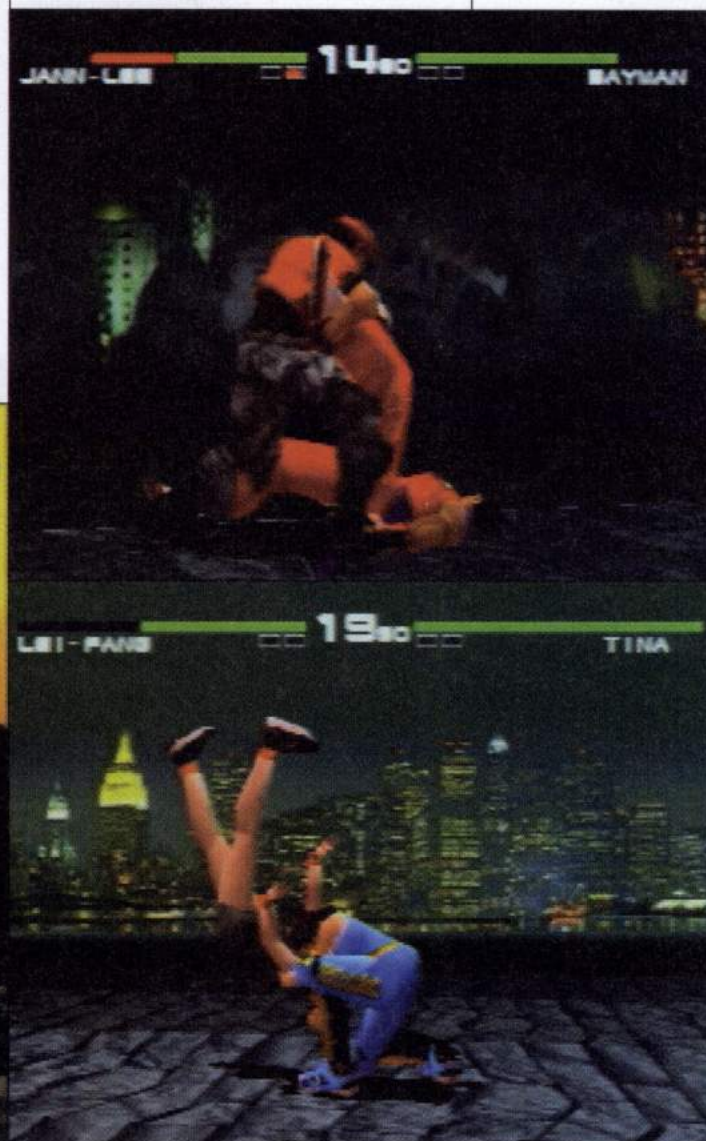
without pages and pages of commands or variations of the same move to learn as in Tekken. You'll find that Dead Or Alive combines the intuitive qualities of Virtua Fighter with the depth and complexity of Tekken with subtle, but profound enhancements of its own, such as the hold button. For fighting game purists this is enough to warrant a purchase on its own.



A relatively simple beat 'em up that is more than skin deep when it comes to gameplay



Whadaaah! Palm strike to the solar plexus.



Yes. Dead or Alive has throws.

X-Men Vs Street Fighter EX

Capcom's Street Fighter franchise hits another license in the form of the X-Men, but something's missing from the home version...

First of all, this is NOT the same game you played in the arcades. The PlayStation's limited memory has forced Capcom to make the game without the tag-team feature that made the game such a big attraction in the first place. However, the second characters will still come out for the super moves and counters, which was the only way Capcom could retain the same level of gameplay, animation and graphical detail of the original. This may sound disheartening to fans of the original, but it's not really all that bad.

First Impressions

On first impressions I thought the game was a complete piece of crud. Without the ability to switch characters, the game seemed rather pointless. The second character became to me almost useless. Having them sitting in the background doing nothing except popping out occasionally to do a super or counter became extremely frustrating. Even worse, you can't even change to your second fighter for the second round after losing the first!

Gameplay-wise, X-Men Vs SF EX retains all the flavour of the arcade. Well, all that's left with the omission of that ONE feature



Cool anime-style graphics that move fast and smooth.

that made the game so special. When I first played, the game was slow, boring and completely devoid of that extra special zing that playing with a tag-team partner had. However, on the faster speed settings and highest difficulty, you can actually have quite a fun, intense and true-to-the-arcade frenzied gaming experience. All the characters move and play just like their arcade counterparts, with only slightly noticeable frame-loss to keep up the same control response and speed of the original. Other than that, the graphics are arcade perfect.

Another problem I had was the energy/damage ratios. The normal moves,

even the 6 or more hit combo do very little damage in comparison to the super moves, which upon reaching level 1 (not very hard to do) can be executed very easily by doing the 'normal' version's motion and pressing two buttons. No matter how hard you try to avoid it, the game becomes a simple race to land those devastating supers first.

Too easy?

The difficulty level of the game was also a disappointment. Even on the hardest setting, the computer just sped up the frequency in which it attacked you, throwing in a few air



The FMV is a punchy, colourful cartoon.



Attention to detail and a commitment to its roots that is second to none is what makes the Streetfighter series a hit game after game. X-Men vs

Street Fighter EX is no exception.



People burn.

combos randomly, but never actually getting any smarter. I also found that on no matter what difficulty level the game was sat on, the computer was perfectly willing and able to walk into nearly all my supers which made the game extremely easy to beat with any character combination.

On the surface there seems to be quite a lot to discover here with so many characters, but apart from the chain combo (or as some call it, 'button smashing') system, there's not much else to discover other than who's super goes best with who's. The low level of difficulty will probably not keep you coming back for more, but this is a good game for those new to Capcom's 2D exploits.

Overall X-Men Vs SF EX is still a good game to buy, albeit with a few flaws. The majority will still find this game fairly entertaining, though the hardcore fighting freaks among us would be best to look towards Marvel Super Heroes or Street Fighter Collection for a more satisfying gaming experience. If you already have those and are hungering for a filler until Gem Fighters arrives, X-Men Vs SF EX is still good fun. If only to see Ryu and Ken throwing out

humongous Dragonball-esque 20 hit fireball supernovas at each other!

Enabling the Tag Mode!

Hot cheat just in! You can switch between fighters during the bouts! To enable tagging, go to the mode selection screen (where you choose Arcade Mode, Vs. etc.) and quickly press: Square, Square, Right, X, L1. If done correct the option screen will appear (the button presses for this code are almost identical to Akuma's Raging Demon, enter the code as you would perform the move).

From here you can change to original mode to enable tagging in Vs. Mode only. Next, choose your characters and have your friend choose the same characters in reverse. For example, if you choose Ken then Ryu your opponent must choose Ryu and then Ken. Then start fighting and tagging to your heart's content!



It's not the arcade conversion you were hoping for, but the PSX version of X-Men Vs SF is still a great beat 'em up, if a little on the easy side



Cammy exhibits her ring of confidence (top).



I'm not sure about the law in this town. There are people (if you can call them people) fighting in the streets against huge monster-type dudes.

Where are the riot cops where are the tanks?

BY: CAPCOM

PRICE: \$89.95

PLAYERS: ONE OR TWO

ACCESSORIES: MEMORY CARD

CLASSIFICATION: C8+

Bushido Blade

Every new fighting game claims to offer something new, but here's one that actually delivers

Over the past five years or so, fighting games have emerged as one of the most dominant of all video game genres. This has never been more apparent than in today's overstuffed console market; a quick look in any store will quickly show disbelievers just how many choices there are, and many of them are of excellent quality. However, all of these games, be they 2D or 3D and regardless of their minor cosmetic differences, have basically followed on from the traditional Street Fighter arena/lifebars/timed rounds system. Recently some games have attempted to change the style in some way, but their success has been limited. Now, though, with the belated release of the weapon based Bushido Blade, Square has done more to keep fighting games fresh than a warehouse full of Tupperware.

Bushido Blade takes a number of departures from standard fighting games and pretty much every one of them qualifies as a damn good idea in anyone's book. In the most obvious difference from other fighting games, combat occurs over vast sprawling areas. This factor, coupled with the absence of a timer, gives a greater sense of freedom to the fighting style and almost eliminates the 'line up and go for it' style that is so commonly found in today's offerings.

The greatest innovation in Bushido Blade, however, is the decision to drop the lifebars. Combat utilizes weapons exclusively, and as such all it takes is one correctly placed blow to slay your opponent. This change in style leads to more realistic action, but more importantly requires you to use your brain for something other than remembering moves and combos (although there are still plenty of both in Bushido Blade).

There are six characters for you to choose from, but in an interesting twist, they do not have set weapons as such and you must also decide on a weapon. The weapons are mostly a variety of swords, with the occasional oddity such as a sledgehammer, and are the real stars of the game. It is these weapons that determine the player's fighting style, not the choice of character, and this is yet another reason why Bushido Blade stands out from the crowd.

Besides the normal one and two player games, Bushido Blade also contains a couple of unusual modes that are worthy of mention. In the eloquently named Slash mode, you find yourself in a corridor containing one hundred assassins who politely line up one at a time to have their gizzards slit. This mode is just as fun as it sounds but unfortunately you have no choice of weapons and must use the katana. As an incidental point, you must defeat all the enemies in slash mode without losing a life if you wish to be able to play as the bosses. Good luck!

POV (point of view) mode puts you into the shoes of your fighter with a tasty first person perspective showing only your arms and your weapon. This mode is very tricky to play in and is a bit of a gimmick really, but if you can get the hang of it, it can be very satisfying to play.

Of the normal modes, the regular one player game for all its interesting facets is a bit of a fizzer. It's good, but it's not as cool as the vs mode. With all the freeing up of the gameplay style, Bushido rocks hardest when you have two people taking advantage of the style. Sure, it can be fun to just jump forward and skewer each other, but

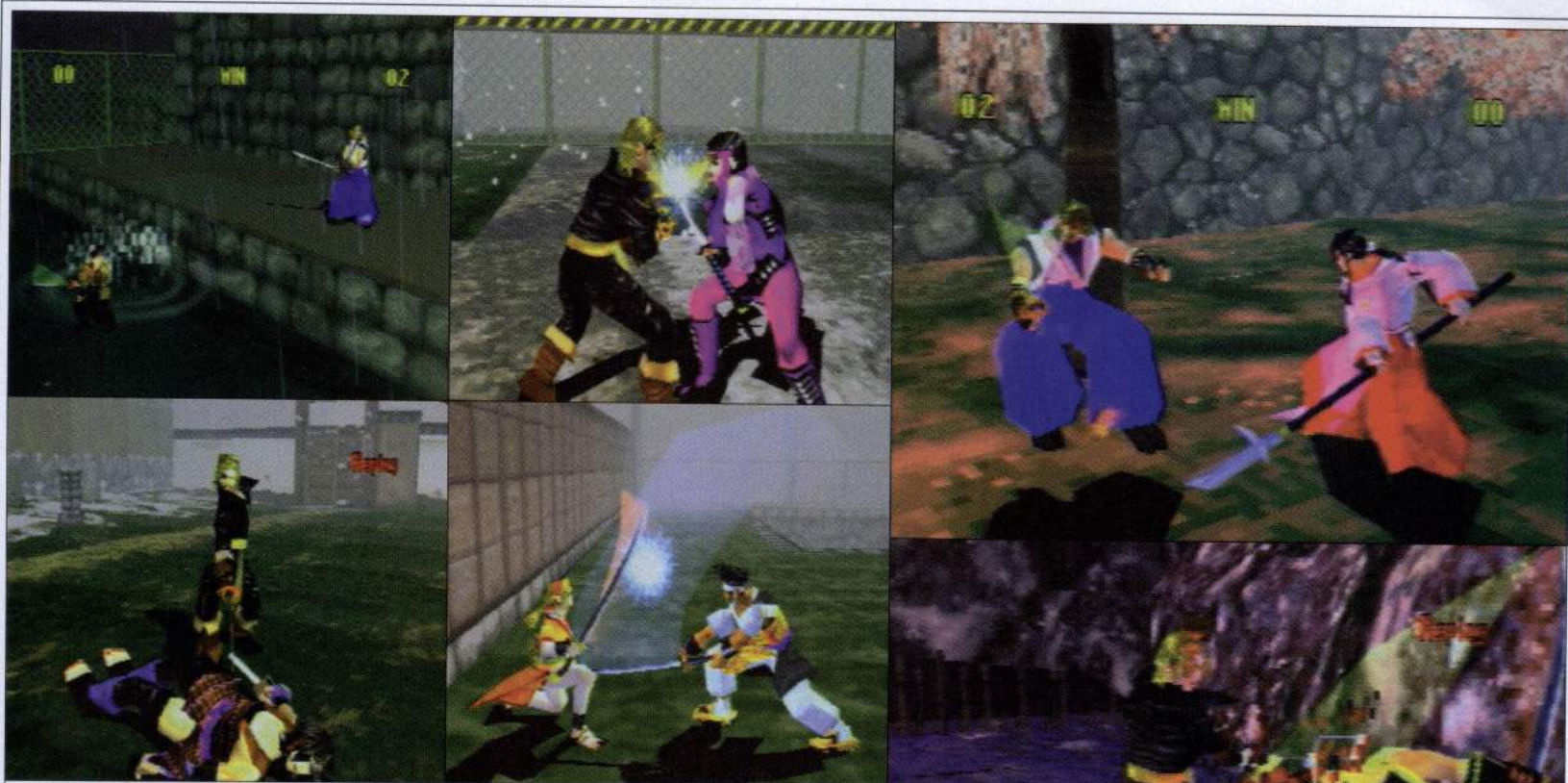


The slash mode (above) where your opponents line up to be slaughtered time and time again.

Sounds like they need a help.



Kill your friends!



These fights probably lasted around 5 seconds.

it's vastly superior sort of fun when you crawl after your crippled opponent for ten minutes trying to lop his head off.

Sound and graphics are well executed and although they aren't the flashiest you've probably seen, the key word here is style. From the great weapons and character design through to the pretty decent music and the kai when you pause the game, this is a stylish effort that really captures the feel of traditional Japanese combat. Some may complain about the lack of dismemberment and realistic blood, but most people will be suitably

impressed by the way blood comes spraying way in which dead characters collapse.

There will be more games coming out in this style that are maybe a bit more complete and with flashier production, but in my opinion Bushido Blade is a landmark game that will be remembered for quite a while.



✪ Bushido Blade is an ambitious attempt at making a realistic fighting game and, despite a few small flaws, is generally quite successful.



How come their boots are so big?



BY: SQUARESOFT

PRICE: \$79.95

PLAYERS: ONE OR TWO

ACCESSORIES: MEMORY CARD

CLASSIFICATION: MA15+

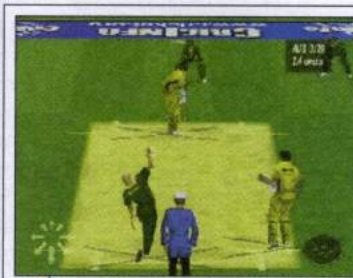
Be careful not to stab anyone in the back or you will be deemed dishonourable. All stabbing will be done in the stomach, arms, legs, head and

neck thank you very much.



Sport Games

Be it kicking a ball around or slamming an opponent into the mat from the top rope, there's bound to be a sport game to tickle your fancy. Apart from the countless soccer games, there is a number of unique titles that cover sports from all walks of life including, yes, cricket, as well as the usual televised weekend pursuits.



84 SHANE WARNE CRICKET



86 WWF WARZONE



88 COOL BOARDERS 3



90 FIFA SOCCER '99



92 EVERYBODY'S GOLF

Shane Warne Cricket '99

At long last, a cricket game has graced the PlayStation.

Rejoice!

Recent history has been unkind to those looking for cricket game on the PlayStation, with not even a single entry. However, the long wait is over for the hordes of cricket fans out there with the arrival of Shane Warne Cricket '99, and the good news is that it's really quite a successful effort.

Cricket is a very complicated sport for replication in video game form. While previous 16-bit console efforts have been quite entertaining to play, there's been something slightly wonky about both the appearance and control. When you consider the huge number of variables inherent in the batting, bowling and fielding involved in even the most uneventful match, it's really no surprise. These days,

however, sport sims are serious business, and Codemasters has gone to great lengths to make SWC look, feel and sound like a game of cricket.

leather and willow

When you first take a look at SWC, you might be thinking that the graphics look a little on the scratchy side, and the screenshots here probably don't help. However once you've been playing for a bit you start to appreciate the motion of the characters, and it is this superb attention to detail that really helps SWC in the graphics department.

With excellent use of motion capture, you can expect your players to do pretty much anything real cricketers would. Batsmen play realistic shots (the late cuts are particularly superb) and when they're not playing shots, they take guard, wander around in the crease and so forth.

The bowlers similarly have realistic actions (although to be fair some of the slower bowlers in particular still look like they're bowling in zero g) and pace around the crease, make appeals and so on. Some of the best motion though occurs in the fielding, with players throwing themselves all over the place, sliding for boundary saves and basically anything you would expect to see in a real game of cricket.

Sound has been similarly well executed in SWC, and it goes a long way towards filling out the total cricket feel. The general ambient effects reflect the ground you're playing at (subdued at Lords, rowdy in Barbados), maintaining that perfect afternoon of cricket murmur. The sounds of play are also great with fine leather on willow sounds, great appeals and so on.

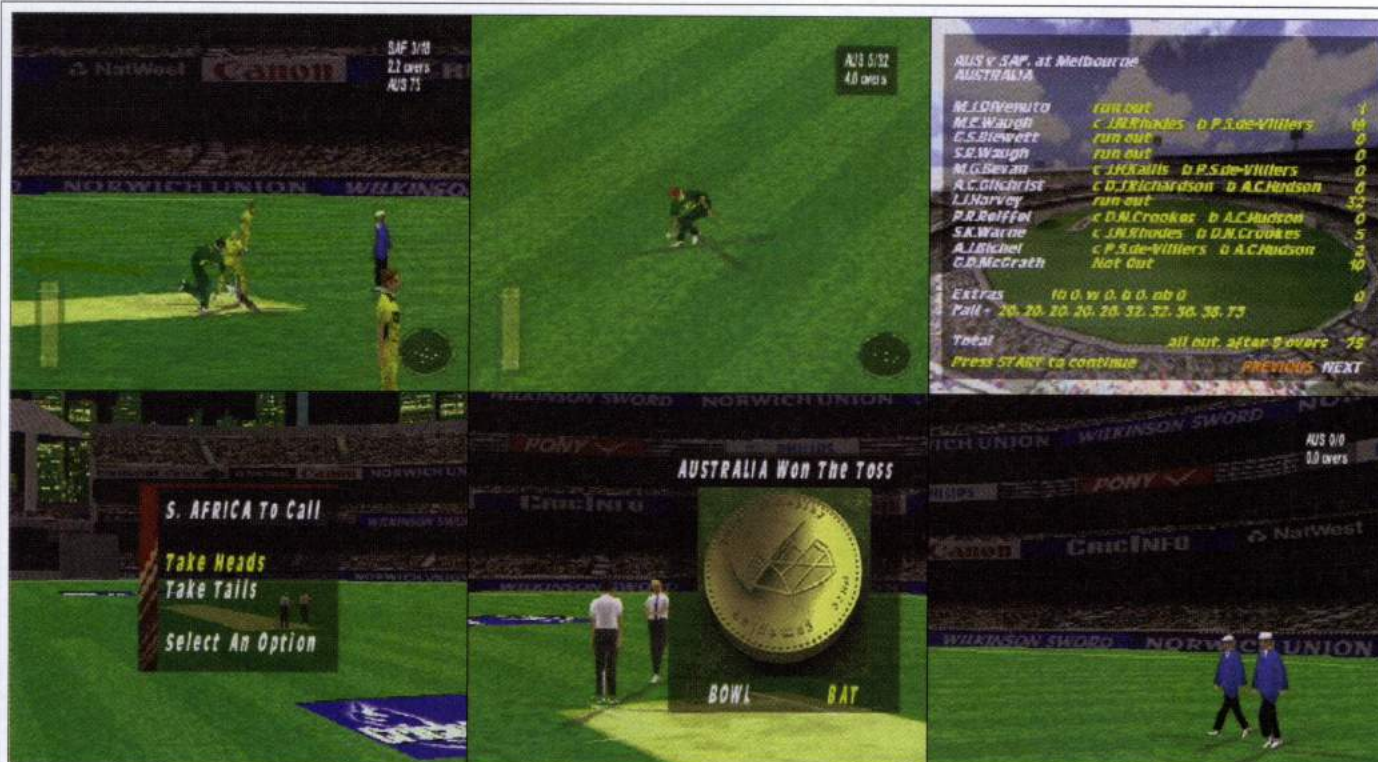
The cherry on the cake though is the fine commentary. Sure it's not as good as Richie Benaud and Tony Greig waxing lyrical about a batsman's "lovely soft hands", but Jonathan Agnew does a decent job and the inclusion of famous whingeing Yorkshire git Geoffrey Boycott ("that's terrible bowling, he'll be very disappointed with that") being the master stroke. This commentary gives you the full ball by ball deal, but by keeping it in character it manages to be unobtrusive.

Steady hands

Control in a game as potentially fiddly as SWC is of paramount importance, and as such, it's a good idea to look individually at the three points that make up the play: batting, bowling and fielding. Batting is quite easily accomplished, without needing to push too many buttons. It's simply a case of pointing in the direction you want the ball to go and pressing the appropriate



Watch Warney run, watch Warney bowl, watch Warney stump another moronic batter. On ya Warney!



Cricket makes for some of the most spectacular screenshots ever. There's umpires, bowlers, batters and...and....and....well it just looks good.

BY: CODEMASTERS

PRICE: \$89.95

PLAYERS: 1 - 4

ACCESSORIES: MEMORY CARD

MULTITAP

CLASSIFICATION: G

button. This simple system works well and makes it impossible to change your stroke up until the last moment. Running between the wickets is usually pretty good and easily controlled, but sometimes your batsmen tend to set off on suicide runs, and I haven't yet worked out how to send them back.

Bowling is also fairly well executed, and while the motion of some bowlers is distracting, the deliveries look realistic and there's a fair variety to choose from. It's usually fairly easy to drop the ball right on the mark, and in a glorious move, Codemasters has made it impossible to bowl a no ball at the point of delivery.

Fielding is slightly more difficult to control, but fortunately you can choose auto fielders (and this will really make your game go a lot more smoothly). If you do elect to control your field, the players can be a bit stiff to move, and the ball can be often too hard to see, even with its helpful corona. In addition, when you dive or slide for a ball, it takes an unrealistic amount of time to get up and return the ball. These small problems can be frustrating, but if you don't like it, then simply opt

for cpu fielders.

To add to all this great cricket action, SWC contains gameplay options galore. You can play as all nine of the test playing nations with multiple pitches for each country involved. You can choose from test, test season, one day series, world cup and limited over encounters of almost any length. In addition, there are a set of challenges which place you in famous scenarios such as old world cup finals and even a 1948 ashes test (and a chance to play as The Don!) These scenarios are an inspired decision and really help to make SWC a complete game. If you've never enjoyed or understood cricket, then don't expect SWC to suddenly change all that, but for the masses of cricket fans salivating in the wings, this is the one. Go and buy it now.



After the long wait, any cricket game would be popular, but SWC is a great game in its own right



Watch Hansy Cronje get smacked for six of this pathetic leg length bowl.

I swear man, the fish was this friggin' big!

WWF Warzone

Rock 'N' Roll Wrestling is

back, with bigger, badder and even more bizarre 'grappling entertainers'. Here's the latest game of the, ahem, 'sport'



Leatherface, the chainsaw wielding freak from The Texas Chainsaw Massacre, seems to have given up slicing and dicing in favour of pummeling opponents to pulp in WWF Warzone!

Well ok, maybe not - we're talking about a wrestling game here after all. But I wouldn't be disappointed if his dead-ringer Mankind let loose with a chainsaw mid fight! Unless you're a fan of the sport - and I'm not - it'd be very easy to dismiss any game in the wrestling genre. Why would I opt for a title featuring a bunch of ugly and sluggish beefcakes, when the likes of Tekken 3 and Tobal 2 are sitting on the other end of the shelf, oozing style in terms of both contenders and their fighting technique?

Because WWF Warzone is actually best played as a party game. It's mean and great fun for a bunch of friends with nothing better to do with a multitap and a wet weekend to wade through!

What an ugly mug...

Gleaned from the testosterone charged intro, it seems that immense bulk, bad fashion sense and unparalleled ugliness are the prerequisites for being a wrestler. All these

characteristics, you'll be pleased to know, have been faithfully captured for each of the wrestlers' digital alter ego.

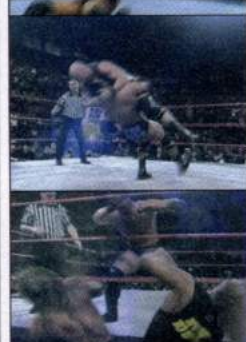
The modelling and textures have been well handled so that there's no mistaking who's who - we're not talking Tekken 3 looks here folks, but nevertheless the results achieved are top notch. Not only does this bunch look good (if indeed 'good' should be the term used), their movements are incredibly lifelike, thanks to some excellent motion capture.

Whether or not each character fights like his real life counterpart I can't say, but the moves certainly look exactly like they do in the preposterous saturday night TV wrestling happy hour!

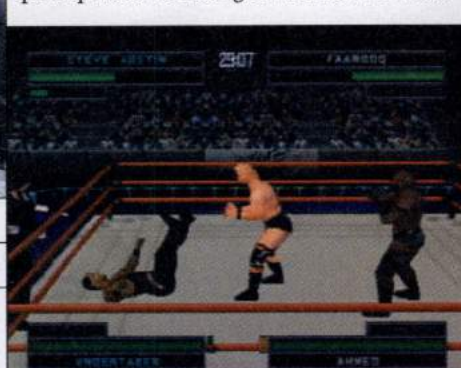
There's a pretty good variety of them, too. Some moves are generic across the board, while other 'super moves' are specific to a character. By pressing the right button and D pad combination, you can throw opponents and knee their family jewels (and what a sound that is!); bounce off the side ropes to clip 'em below the chin, clobber them after leaping off a side post, and worse - it seems to be pretty much all here!

Fight 'till you drop

The audio gives some of the biggest laughs in the game. Pinned down opponents flailing helplessly will also utter a variety of moans and squeals, and you



All the action of the ballet.



Tag team wrestling is great fun especially when you grab a handy chair and start laying people out.

Be careful not to be on the receiving end of a chair though....it hurts.



BY: ACCLAIM

PRICE: \$89.95

PLAYERS: ONE OR TWO

ACCESSORIES: MEMORY CARD

CLASSIFICATION: G

The only thing that beats using a chair is when you can jump on someones head from on top of the ropes. Or of corse you can always tread on his toe. Ouch, Mummy!



As everyone knows, wrestlers have beautiful physiques.

can really feel the pain in some of the contact crunches!

The music is mainly of the loud and fast guitar variety, perfectly suited for such a game - what, you want Mozart or something?

Livening up the mood is the running commentary by a duo which I presume must be the Margaret Pommerantz and David Stratton of the US wrestling world, except that they're two blokes. The crowd's pretty rowdy too; once in a while you'll catch the odd heckler yelling 'you suck!' or something to that effect. Other times they'll cheer you on, depending on how you play.

Forget about the single player challenge - the typical 'fight till you reach the top rank' scenario. A multitap is essential for maximum enjoyment; even though we're talking wrestling here. Four-player WWF Warzone is more like a brutally funny Poy Poy with beefcake. Essentially it's pure chaos: one moment you're laughing your head off from mercilessly bashing the crap outta your opponents, then you're laughing because you're on the receiving end of their hits!

You can opt for a free for all battle, tag team match and a cage mode which perhaps all those wrestling fans out there could explain the point of to me. Funniest of all is a weapons mode, in which you can pick up bottles, chairs, and even a TV set to smash over anyone in your sights!

Not quite perfect

Despite the polished characters and hilarious gameplay, WWF Warzone fails to hit the multiplayer game king mark. The controls are easy to grasp and a comprehensive training mode helps considerably with mastering the moves, but the character's response can be sluggish at times. Then again, maybe it's just the 'wrestling feel'. Those who are used to playing lighting fast fighting games may need to adjust to the pace.

What really annoyed me was in even during the free for all matches, I found it very difficult to get my player to switch from pummeling one opponent to the other foe. Only a handful of attempts would succeed, while all the other punches or kicks just polygon-clipped with no damage effect.

But in the end if there is one wrestling game that could appeal beyond its legion of fans, WWF Warzone is it. The create a player mode alone is bloody funny; consid-

erable time was spent by us putting together the most ridiculous characters, giving them unprintable names and then chucking them in the ring for a match!

Even if you can't stand wrestling on the TV, you'd be missing out on some serious fun if you didn't give this a go. If only the graphics didn't get so glitchy in points and the control bugs fixed (I wanna kick who I want, when I want to!), I'd recommend it without hesitation. As it stands, WWF Warzone is certainly worth hiring, but whether you'd buy it depends if you think the laughs are big enough to overshadow the flaws.



It may be flawed, but WWF Warzone is a wrestler in a class of its own and will provide many fun filled hours when played with a bunch of friends



"Hold still, you've got dog poo on your shoe!"

Cool Boarders 3

The Cool Boarders games

may not have the best graphics on the PlayStation, but when it comes to the crunch the gameplay rocks hard

It seems that 1998 will go down in gaming history as the year of threes. Or at least Sony is celebrating a trifecta of a year with titles like Tomb Raider 3, Crash Bandicoot 3 and the awesome Cool Boarders 3 due for release before the year's end.

This time the rights for Cool Boarders 3 were snapped up by a new development company, so along with a new team came new ideas. Intrinsically it's the same game but the changes have made a mountain of difference, pardon the pun. While the first two efforts in this fine trilogy were pretty darn good efforts, they had their fair share of faults, including a lack of tracks and characters, not to mention ordinary graphics. But the third instalment looks like it'll leave most other boarding games far, far behind.

Radical Dudes?

It has been said that snowboarding is a dignified way of hurling yourself to the ground while wildly gyrating your body. Well with Cool Boarders 3 you don't have to actually damage yourself in any way, unless it's your thumbs.

Okay, so the first thing you'll notice about Cool Boarders 3 is the impressive

amount of characters there are to choose from including such radical dudes like Cliff, Joker, Blake or Tadashi. There are 13 all up and they're presented in a hand drawn fashion. I'm not quite sure why, but it looks nice anyway.

There are also heaps and heaps of official boards to pick from, including the legendary Barton boards, and they come in freestyle, free ride and downhill. In other words fast, faster and fastest. The boards actually look really cool this time round instead of being just different colours and generic in design.

Snow bunnies

There's literally a swag load of nice new additions which make this game stand out. The different events in Cool Boarders 3 are loaded to the brim with various kinds of races including downhill flat strap racing, freestyle trick city, the often ignored slalom and the excellent and entertaining half pipe.

There are heaps of runs on mountains and slopes of varying difficulty, so like the first two games you can start off easily and work your way up, literally. There are also trick stages where you can show off your fake mistys and inverted grabs, not to



Last one to the trees bites.

mention double twists.

Also included to bump up the entertainment factor is the ability to choose whether you want to have a regular or goofy stance.

The joy is the new punch feature where you can smack one of your mates in the head as s/he tries to overtake on a downhill run. It's good fun, and is funny as hell when you make them plant it. It also features analogue control which makes for some interesting tricks. So, as far as the added extras we all want go, the goods have really been delivered.

I always thought piste was what you are when drunk



Look at all the cool people you can be.



The riding styles and the tricks you can execute are both very authentic. The snowboarders look smooth and get plenty of hang time out of their airs.

Check out the style top centre.



It's all about cars... jumpin' over cars...

What has to be the most impressive improvement is the graphics. Now this was always a common gripe regarding the first two games, the fact that the pixellisation was horrendous and that the clipping was too noticeable. Along with everything else which has been improved, the new developers look like they've started from scratch and designed a whole new game with little resemblance to the originals.

Radical dudes

The boarders themselves have been made to look as real as possible while the backgrounds look brilliant compared to most snowboarding games.

There is little to no clipping in this latest effort and pixellisation has been kept to a bare minimum, while the redraw has been moved even further into the distance making it much, much easier to see where the tracks go.

The only problem I have with Cool Boarders 3 is that the control of your character is harder in this version than any before.

With the first game it was possible to

pick up the control and be doing tricks within a few minutes. This version is a lot more complicated - it takes a few hours to get the hang of being able to pull off relatively simple moves. It may be my imagination but it seems you can't get as much air in this game as the first two, which in my opinion is the whole point of boarding. Apart from that, the characters play very nicely and once you've got the hang of the controls you'll be pulling off tricks like a seasoned professional.

In a nutshell, Coolboarders 3 is the best of its kind on the PSX. It has heaps of characters, tonnes of tracks, lots of boards, a plethora of tricks, great graphics and a groovy soundtrack to boot. This title should begin to set a new standard in the winter sport games for the PlayStation. The only wintery type games we now need is a luge and ski jump game - that would be awesome!



Easily the best snowboarding game you can play at home, Cool Boarders 3 has enough lifespan to keep you carving for months



The half-pipe. Speed and style are of the essence here.



Umm... two out of three of the pictures above are of guys doing stale-fish grabs. Can you tell the odd one out boys and girls? That's right, the top left

is a board slide. And what a nice board slide it is.

BY: SONY

PRICE: \$69.95

PLAYERS: ONE

ACCESSORIES: MEMORY CARD

DUAL SHOCK

CLASSIFICATION: G

fifa '99

The best ever PlayStation football simulation is now even better than it was before

Ah yes, EA has sent down from on high another in their series of FIFA games - and luckily enough, just in time for the Christmas/New Year spending spree. Is it worth treating yourself to a late Christmas present, are there enough new features and enhancements to warrant you putting FIFA 98 and/or World Cup in storage in favour of the latest version? Well, yes, though there are still a few areas that could be bettered.

Room for improvement

As we've come to expect with each new version, the graphics and game engine have been reworked so that there's even more detail and fluidity in player movement. As usual, these features remain at the cutting edge of what's possible, with players' stumbles, twists and turns almost exactly the same as in real life.

Unfortunately, there are a few areas that still require attention from EA before they can really sit back and say that they've done the best they could. Firstly in my 'pet hates about the FIFA series' is the menu system they continue to use, which is as usual slick and pretty, but not nearly as functional as it should be. And then there's the skill moves, which had been well done in previous FIFA's,

but in 99 for some reason a few have been taken out, so that the only useful moves left are jinking left and right and the spin move, which is really quite disappointing.

New features

OK, my whines are out of the way, now lets get to the good stuff, and there is plenty of good stuff too. Players are smaller this time around, so the pitch feels a more realistic size, and the way that they set themselves out on the field allows for more open space and possession play, and far fewer 'run-away' goals than with 98 or WC.

A few new control moves have been added as well, like catching the ball on the chest and guarding it while it comes under control, though it is too easy to grab the ball on the chest and turn 180° in a split second. Also, in what's probably my favourite new gameplay feature, the all but useless 'lob' has been revamped so that it's more of a lofted pass now, and comes in handy when getting the ball up to your forwards, or switching play.

Happily, the speed burst seems to also have been tweaked, so that it is possible to cut a swathe through a couple of defenders on speed alone, but you won't be able to keep it up for the length of the pitch. You should

find that it's used much more as a speed burst than as a button you're constantly pressing, as with previous FIFA games.

Custom Leagues

There should be enough variety in the leagues and teams available to keep most people happy, with first divisions from the English Premier league, Spain, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Brazil, France, Portugal, Scotland, Sweden, USA, as well as a European Super League and international teams (including Australia). You can even design your own leagues or cups, with an extensive range of parameters if you're not happy with EA's version of the 'Dream League'.

For anyone with less than my fanatical interest in the sport of football, and the FIFA series of sims, you'd be hard pressed to come up with any serious reservations about this - it's another top game from EA and well worth a look if you've any interest in the sport.



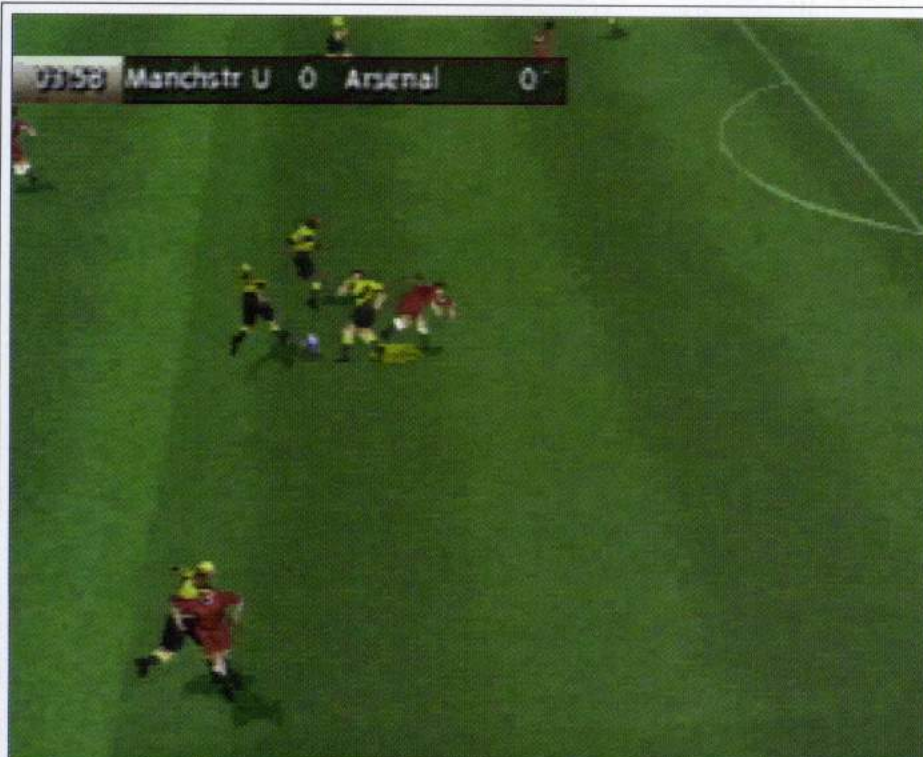
Lots of little changes, but essentially the same games as last year's versions, FIFA 99 is still the best soccer game out there.



The FMV will make you feel like a star!



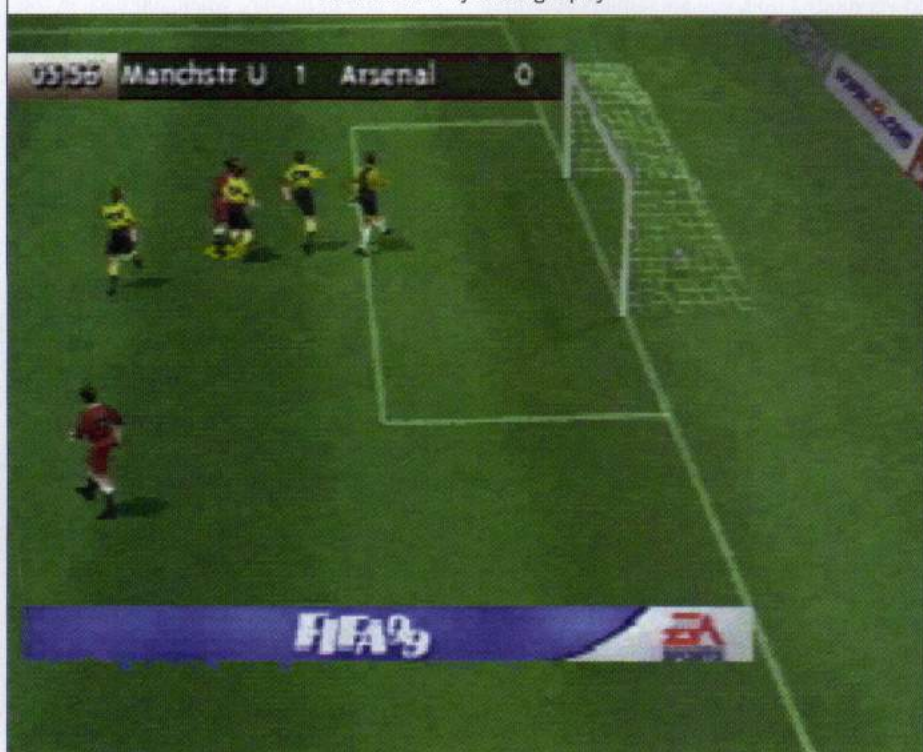
The grass is green. Guys in shorts and shin-pads are running around, chasing a checkered leather ball on it. Yep sure looks like soccer to me, listen to the crowd roar.



EA have gone to much trouble to make sure that the stadiums that you play in are as realistic as the gameplay itself. Pictured here (above) are just two of the slick looking EA stadiums available for day and night play.



Every kind of statistic and option is available (top).



We can be heroes, just for one day. Well whenever you like really. Man-U one, Arsenal nil. Play the English Premier League any night of the week.



Is that David Beckham (top)? My, this game is realistic. Next there'll be a crowd brawl.

BY: EA
PRICE: \$99.95
PLAYERS: 1 - 8
CLASSIFICATION: G
ACCESSORIES: MEMORY CARD
MULTI-TAP
DUAL SHOCK

Everybody's Golf

Despite the cute little characters and their silly pants, this is one of the best golf games around



The three shots above demonstrate the progress of the game: driving, driving again, then putting six or seven times.

Golf has always been a slightly unusual inclusion in the console repertoire, somehow seeming more at home on dad's office PC. Additionally, console golf games to date have often been too dry, clinical and just plain boring to warrant prolonged investigation. Who wants to toddle around after a couple of old fogies? The PlayStation has been no exception to this rule and, other than the passable Actua Golf series, there hasn't really been a golf game to get excited about. Now, however, Sony's Everybody's Golf is set to change all of that with its distinctly Japanese arcade flavour and its eminently playable golf action. A stroll on the green will never be the same again!

Fun for Everybody!

Everybody's Golf is an arcade style golf game that features no real players and no real courses. Instead, you get a bunch of cute, super-deformed eager little golfers and a selection of five courses. Although these courses aren't based on any existing ones, the are laid out over a variety of locations including Hawaii and Mt. Fujiyama, giving something of a 'world tour' feel about the proceedings.

In tune with the arcade flavour of Everybody's Golf, you are initially presented with only one of the courses and two of the eight available players. You must unlock the remainder by progressing through the game. This progression is achieved by accumulating experience points and working your way up through various levels. Points are awarded for sub par holes, completing the various tournaments, and so on.

It may sound more like an adventure game or RPG system than something to do with a sport game, but in practice, the points system works well and gives a fine indication of your progress with fair targets to work towards.

Mind the rough!

When you first start playing Everybody's Golf, it may not appear to be that encouraging and some hardened golf nuts may have trouble dealing with the cartoon-style approach and the brain numbing soundtrack. However, once you get going, Everybody's Golf plays quite superbly and turns out to be more than addictive.

Hitting the ball exactly where you want it to go is fairly easily achieved, and even putting is nicely handled. Some of the player swings might appear to be somewhat awkward, but the physics and motion of the ball

movement are truly excellent, with distinctly different results, Everybody's Golf is far superior to many golf sims that take themselves far more seriously.

Fun with a club

Graphically, Everybody's Golf may not appear to be that flashy or impressive, but its implementation more than makes up for this. The courses are clearly laid out and hazards are easily spotted. Importantly, there are no redraw delays, and you can zoom in to any point on the course with no delay, and view your shot from any angle. Once you've taken your shot you can instantly replay from a selection of views, and your best holes will be automatically saved to memory card for later viewing in the super shots section.

The music is, unfortunately, one of the weaker points, with a soundtrack that lies somewhere between dodgy arcade music and that sort of endlessly looping dreck that turns up in so many RPGs. Needless to say, turn it off or risk permanent brain dysfunction. After all, playing golf is supposed to help you get closer to achieving inner peace.

At Last, the 19th hole!

At the end of the day, when you back in the clubhouse wearing your smoking jacket and sipping the gin & tonic, Everybody's Golf is successful simply because it offers good, solid, fun gameplay. And quite frankly, it's not that often you get to say that about most games, least of all a golf game. The experience system provides a good progression for longterm play, and the wealth of gameplay options (match play, stroke play, tournament, vs and the highly entertaining mini golf) keep the action fresh enough to keep you coming back for a quick hole or two every so often.

Everybody's Golf naturally supports up to four players for team play, and while the fast progress makes multiplayer action more feasible, it will still take you well over an hour to get through a full eighteen holes, even with only one partner.

To many people, golf games may be a bit of a mystery, but with its friendly interface and solid gameplay, Everybody's Golf should appeal to golfing nutters and casual observers alike.



Despite its overtly cute appearance, Everybody's Golf is the best golf game currently available on the PlayStation



There is plenty of detail in the game, with rambling courses and great arial views to show you exactly where your ball isn't.

Pictured bottom left: extreme golfers.

BY: SONY

PRICE: \$59.95

PLAYERS: 1 - 4

CLASSIFICATION: G

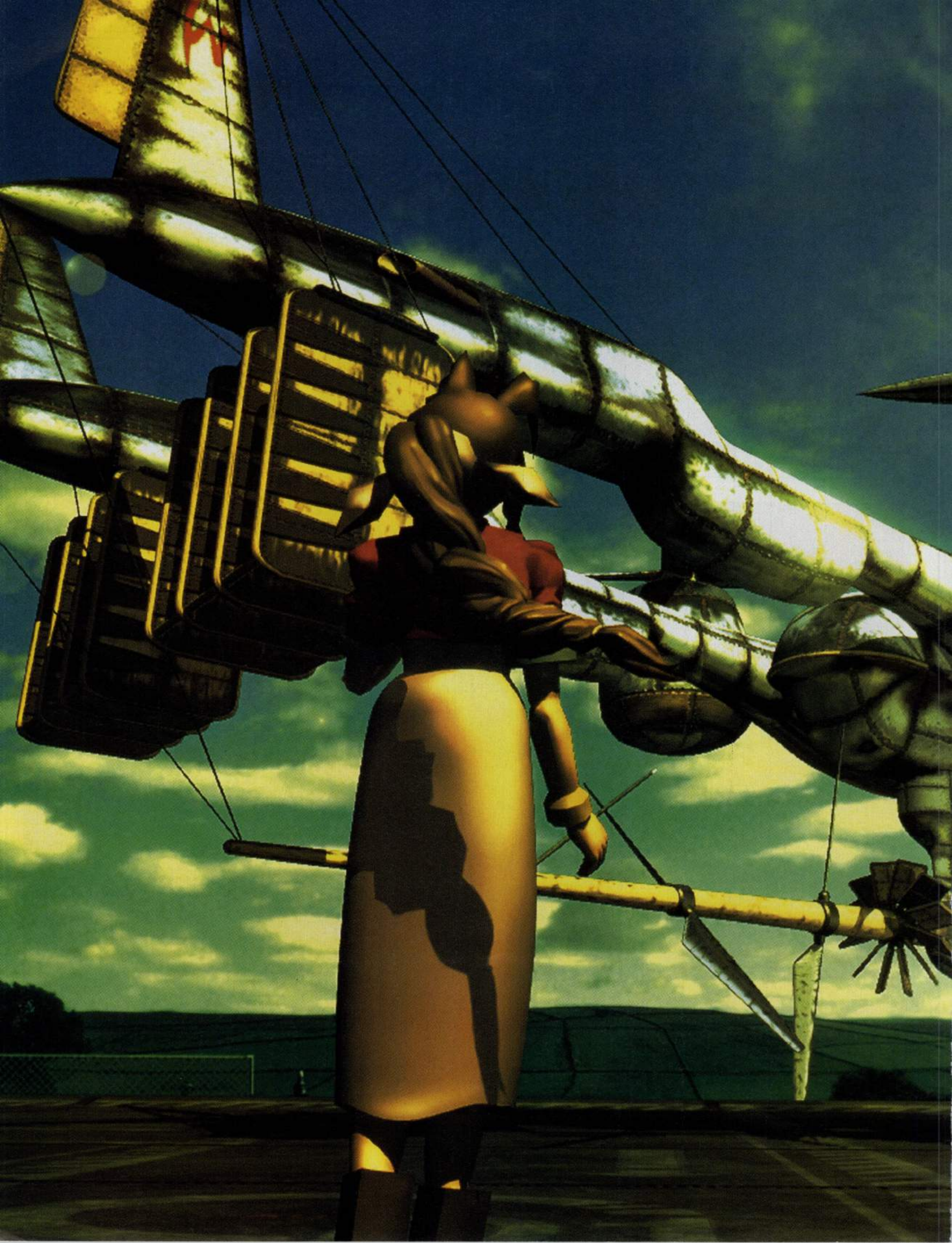
ACCESSORIES: MEMORY CARD

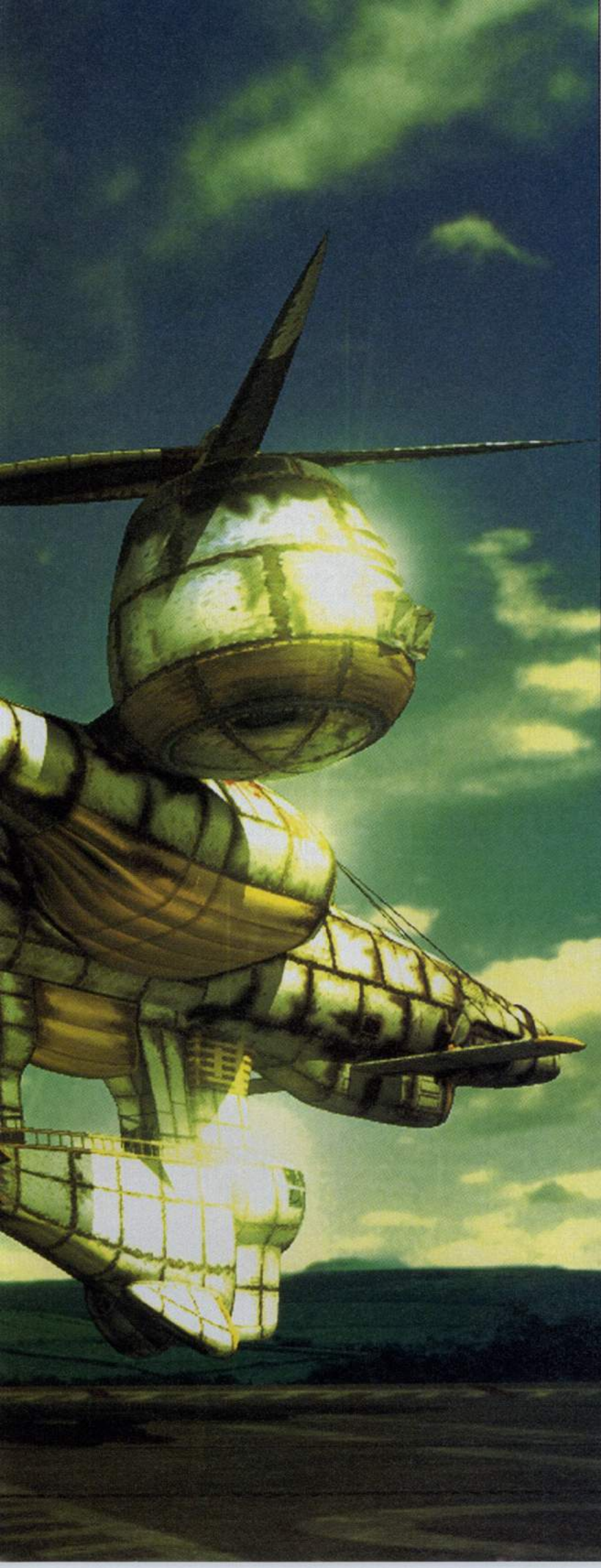
MULTI-TAP



Kids keep on swingin'...

This splendid sequence illustrates the importance of a good bunker style. As you can see, our little guy here is pretty much dead on target. Now all we have to do is concentrate on not getting in the sand traps in the first place.





The Rest

There are plenty of games which can't be easily put into any particular category, however they are no less enjoyable or interesting than their more familiar brethren. From dancing in time to your favourite Spice Girls tune to creating your own music, or just getting lost in the massive world that makes up the epic Final Fantasy VII, you'll find a game to suit your tastes, no matter how freaky they are!



94 BUST A GROOVE



96 SPICE WORLD



98 FINAL FANTASY VII



100 FLUID



102 POINT BLANK

Bust A Groove

If you've ever wanted to don the gear and flash the moves, but were too afraid to try (or just damn lazy), Bust A Groove is the game for you!

Bust A Groove is an inspired application of a fighting game's gameplay mechanics, where instead of punching and kicking the polygons outta your opponents, you must out-dance them! Initially there's 10 groovy characters to select, each of whom has a stage, a song and a unique dancing style.

There's two steps to making your character get down and boogie. Firstly you must tap the directional pad commands in order, as displayed on-screen, before the 4th beat of the bar. Secondly, in time with 4th beat, you must press either the circle or X button as indicated to finish the sequence.

Get the timing right, and your ultra-cool-virtual-alter-ego will start grooving in a manner that'll probably take you much longer to perfect in real life. Unless you're naturally good at this sort of thing of course. In effect, it's really just like performing a special move in a fighting game, except the final stage of the button sequence has to be done in time with music.

They'll get progressively more complex the better you become, sometimes displaying two options. On the bottom of the screen is a dance-o-meter which shows how well you're doing. Naturally, it increases as you get more sequences right. I guarantee

that you'll be in stitches trying to complete some of the harder ones! Miss the beat and they'll revert back to the simplest one and your dance-meter level drops a tad.

Neo disco chic

Bust a Groove's graphics are just brilliant. The dancers are arguably the most stylishly dressed bunch to appear in a game yet - if you're into track suits, flares with camouflage patterns or gas-masks! Presented in high-res and possessing some incredibly lifelike motion capture, they dance with panache I'll probably never attain on any dance floor in my lifetime.

The stage designs are equally impressive, from Hiro-kun's Saturday Night Fever vibe (complete with disco ball of course) to Heat's flaming pad; if Hell had a funky dance floor, it'd probably look something like this! During competition, the camera cuts between static and dynamic tracking shots, at times focusing on one contestant during their 4-bar dance solos. Why, it's like watching the Solid Gold Dancers, except much better!

Now it would suck stupendously for a dancing game to have bad music. Luckily Bust a Groove features great tunes that are guaranteed to get your feet tapping. They reflect each character's look and the stage

design extremely well too. With a few exceptions, they're sung in Japanese, but even if you don't understand a single word, they're totally catchy. Kitty N's disco number is so infectious it'll probably be imprinted on your brain in no time!

Disco king?

Bust a Groove is one of the wackiest and most original games of late - remember folks, this was released in Japan before the similar but lightweight Spice World game. Comparisons can be drawn with Parappa the Rappa; as both involve timing to beats as an integral part of the gameplay. But ultimately they have a totally different feel and the inclusion of a two player vs mode gives this game the edge in terms of party play. Even non-game players will at the very least be intrigued enough by the moves and camerawork to look on as people play.

While almost perfect, there are a few areas in which it could be improved. My biggest gripe is the scoring; the dance o meter is a very unreliable means of gauging whether you'll ultimately win or lose the round. Sometimes, even though at the end of the song your meter is higher than your opponents', you'll still lose the round. Why? No



The introduction is a low budget Flashdance.



You make me feel dancin' gonna dance the night away...

Check out the new Spice Girl (above), Stupid Cat Spice.



Their clothes are cool, their moves are cool, this whole game is damn cool.



Saturday night fever also makes a comeback...minus big John of course.

idea. At a guess, it seems to display how well you're dancing at the time, as opposed to your overall dance level throughout the duration of the song. The Dance View Mode is good, but what's the point if you can't actually save a mini movie? While I have no complaints with the music, it'd be nice if each character had two songs or more. Just to up the variety a bit.

Minor gripes aside, I'd not hesitate to recommend Bust a Groove. Immaculately presented from the ultra cool intro to the selection screens, it's charm is totally infectious. Even if the music isn't exactly to your taste, the game has to be experienced

regardless for a laugh or two. The character designs are nothing short of superb, kitschy yet oozing style and their moves have to be seen to be appreciated. More challenging than Spice World, better suited for a bunch of players than Parappa and in a technical class of it's own, Bust a Groove is the essential crazy-ass disco inferno game of the year!



Bust a Groove is an instant classic; one of those inspired games that defy the standard genres and sets one of its own. Get it now!



Let's do the Bus Stop baby.



Break dancing makes a welcome comeback in this game. Which is great for Beat Street fans... get out your hi-tops and Addidas track-suit we're

gonna hit the streets with our linoleum mat.

BY: SONY

PRICE: \$69.95

PLAYERS: ONE OR TWO

ACCESSORIES: MEMORY CARD

CLASSIFICATION: G

Point Blank

As well as Time Crisis, Point Blank is the other G-Con compatible game available and it's a ripper

Remember the old days at fun parks? Air rifle in hand, firing at cans 'n stuff at the shooting gallery stall? Point Blank is like a video game equivalent, except there's oodles of target games that test your reflexes, judgment, accuracy, trigger-finger perseverance - and push them to the limit!

The Arcade Mode has three settings of difficulty; a training level has 4 stages. The medium and hard levels both have 16 stages grouped into lots of 4 that you can play in any order. These stages are randomly selected from a massive bank, so chances are every game will have a different combination. A 'shoot a treasure chest' bonus round half way through grants you either an extra 'life' or other goodies; you generally lose a life if you shoot something you're not supposed to or fail the

objective as specified at the beginning of each stage.

Fun with a gun

The huge variety of stages can be generalised into a few categories:

The one shot deal, where you have to shoot a falling leaf or an erratic little UFO. A tricky stage involves shooting three bouncing balls of varying sizes with just one bullet - that must pierce all the targets at once. Every ball you hit on its own multiplies; if you screwed it a few times... it's time to accept defeat!

The trigger finger killers, where in a space of anything from 5-25 seconds, you have to shoot everything in sight and hit a certain quota of targets. These can be rows of bottles, a bunch of cardboard cutout ninjas or a school of piranhas. Or car zooming around the screen that you have to pump full of lead till it explodes!

The 'shoot a specific target' stages, where the item pops up for a second alongside stuff that you can't shoot. It can be a red target amongst blue targets and bombs. Or a certain stuffed animal toy amongst a bunch of others. The rate at which they pop up quickens to a ridiculous pace, and yes, you have to bullseye a certain quota before time's up! When a stage is strewn with cutout terrorists that pop up amongst a sea of moving innocents with arms raised, you really feel like taking on the advice offered in the movie Speed: 'shoot the hostage'!

Every single stage Point Blank offers is selectable in a Training Mode, where you can select from 4 levels of difficulty and be presented with a chart that assesses your accuracy afterwards. A Special Mode complements the Arcade Mode with a whole bunch of extra levels exclusive to the Playstation version. There's even a Quest game! Resembling a top-down RPG, points are won by participating in the shooting levels that occur randomly as your characters roam the land. These can be used to buy goodies at stores, should you happen to enter a village.

Being an arcade conversion, Point Blank has dual G-Con support so you can invite a pistol packing friend over for a shootout. There's also a great party mode in which up to 4 players can compete in an elimination match or you can set up two teams of 4 players to shoot it out. To even up participant's skill levels, handicaps can be set and before every



The different levels make for some excellent gaming. If you miss your targets you'll have to do it over again and again and again.



It's a psycho Bert and Ernie.



If you shoot the bombs you're cactus.

subsequent player begins a match, they have an opportunity to recalibrate the G-Con to their line of sight.

Thrilling killing

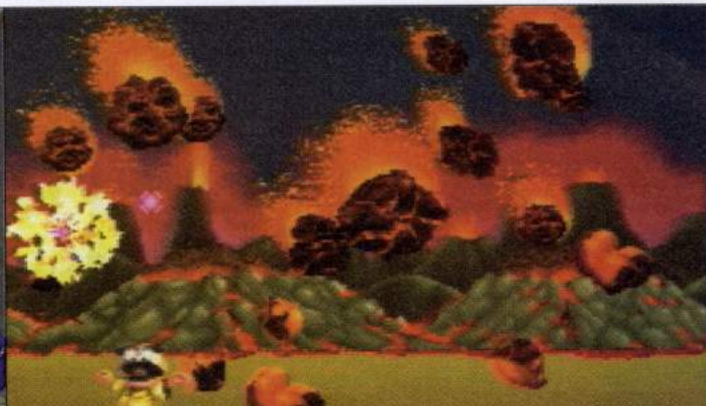
The graphics are nothing to write home about. Barren of any polygons in most cases, the game looks almost 16-bit. But they're perfectly suited for the shooting gallery vibe the game is trying to evoke. Similarly the sound effects are hardly booming but hey, the G-Con duty this time round is being an air pistol after all! Some shattering targets are accompanied by this great cheesy glass breaking sound and the music really adds to the atmosphere. In turns up beat, mysterious or dramatic and always suited to the specific stage, it sounds as if you're participating in a game show.

Where Point Blank really excels is in the playability department; each stage is great fun to play, well presented and often has a touch of humour, especially when game mascots Dr. Don and Dr. Dan are in them! The pace starts off fast and

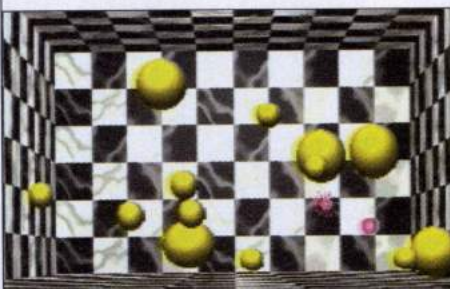
quickly goes into overdrive; compete with some friends and the pressure goes up a few notches more as you try to get as many hits as possible, or bullseye that one target before your opponent does. There's so many combinations and variety of stages that competitors can still get a surprise or two well into a night's worth of playing when they're sprung with a new one. Some are relatively easy while others are rock hard. The multi-player options make Point Blank a great party game - possibly the perfect party game - as there's no button combinations or pad moves to memorise. Anybody can just pick it up and go for it; all that counts are accuracy and reflexes. Don't be fooled by the simple graphics. Solid presentation and attention to playability makes this game is a gem.

★★★★★

Point Blank offers funny, tense and frantic shooting action. It's deceptively simple and incredibly fun - miss it at your own risk!



Animals with sunnies...cool.



For some strange reason, chickens figure quite largely in this game. Could be an ancient, red-neck, chicken hunting thing. Or perhaps

Toyota Camry corporate sponsorship?

BY: NAMCO

PRICE: \$89.95

PLAYERS: ONE OR TWO

ACCESSORIES: G-CON

MEMORY CARD

CLASSIFICATION: G

Spice World

The invasion is not complete until the entertainment systems of the planet's inhabitants are infected with the Spice virus...



The Spice Girls: soaring pop phenomenon or musical pestilence? Regardless of your opinion, the Spice Girls continue to be absurdly successful, moving their focus to movies, deodorant, cameras, spice racks and of course a shiny new game for the PSX. Spice World isn't really a game in the traditional sense, though, being more of a multimedia fanzine type of thing. Let me just say at this point that die hard Spice Girl fans should just go out and buy Spice World now. You know you want to and you know you will, so just get it over and done with. If, however, your appreciation of the Spice Girls is a little less dogmatic, then sit back and relax as I slice open the abdominal cavity of Spice World and have a good rummage through its intestines.

Spice World contains two distinct sections: an interview section and the 'interactive experience' itself. The interview section, called Spice Network, contains footage of the girls answering various banal questions along with some behind the scenes footage on the set of their movie and videos, as well as various other appearances. Here fans can relive their favourite Spice moments, while curious parties (ie non-fans) can marvel at the surrealism of the Spice Girls meeting the likes of Nelson Mandela and Prince Charles. This is the perfect add-on for the dedicated Spice fan and for what it is, it's quite well executed, with the video footage being remarkably good quality. It's not that long, only running for 15 minutes or so, but I'd say that it's more than long enough for most people.

Thus we come to the game itself. The object here is to produce your own customised Spice Girls video clip. You have to choose and the choreography, as well as directing the final product. This is accomplished in four stages.

Do it to me, Baby

First of you have to remix a track from the five Spice hits available: Who do you think you are?, Spice up your life, Move over, Wannabe and Say you'll be there. To do this you have nine sections from the various songs for you to assemble in the desired order. The platform style interface for this is quite nicely done, but the whole thing is a little strange over all. The required number of blocks is 18, which seems a little arbitrary and actually isn't that long.

Once you've mixed your next big hit, it's time to learn how to dance, courtesy of lessons with a funky black dude with a fine head of hair. This part is quite entertaining,

resembling a cross between PaRappa and Bust a Move Dance and Rhythm Action, but there's not really a great deal of skill involved. All that's involved in mastering the steps is pushing the correct button as they appear on the screen in a slow and steady fashion. The fro-meister is cool, but it's hardly what you'd call memorable gameplay. Once you've picked up some moves, you have to teach the other girls what to do. With that accomplished, you can head to the studio to capture the action on film. This is the final section and there's not a lot to do here except to use the control pad to change camera angles and focus, as well as performing tracking shots and generally directing the cinematography of your new video.

Do you really want it?

Overall the whole process is quite an amusing novelty and if you're a fan it's probably jolly good fun as well. However, it soon becomes apparent that there's not really a lot to this title, and after you've played it through once, you've pretty much seen everything there is to see. Sure you can repeat the process, remixing all the songs to your hearts content, but it's a fairly repetitive process. This has a lot to do with the graphic production of Spice World. While the five Spices are fairly well rendered caricatures, the setting are a little on the drab side and there aren't any different backgrounds or costumes that could have helped alleviate this digital ennui.

In the end this isn't a game as such and probably shouldn't be considered as one. Rather, it's a piece of fan material and while this is quite valid, it doesn't look that good when not viewed through the rose-tinted glasses of fawning fandom. I'll happily admit that I had fun playing Spice World - but only for about half an hour, after which I'd finished the game!

What's missing here is the levity that made the movie so much fun. The film was a piss-take, a gentle poke at their own on-screen personas. The game really could have used that, rather than being the fairly serious bid for the dedicated fan audience that it is. In short, Spice World is definitely worth a bit of a look, but it's hard to imagine anyone apart from the most devoted fan finding long term appeal.



Not so much a game as another Spice product. Spice World still has a certain something going for it. Now if I could just work out what...



Check out the size of those platform shoes!

And Scary Spice's hair isn't exactly small. And

I guess, neither are their bank balances.



Get your fingers ready. It's time to boogie on down with Scary Spice and the outrageous Dr Afro... the moves appear at the bottom of your screen so you can tap your buttons to the beat. Kind of like dancing by numbers.

BY: CODEMASTERS

PRICE: \$39.95

PLAYERS: ONE

ACCESSORIES: MEMORY CARD

CLASSIFICATION: G



Aghhh! It's a horrible monster! Oh, it's only Ginger.

Posh wiggles it for the punters while Scary tries to muscle her big hairy head in on the action.

The Spice Girls scrub-up looking, well, like the Spice Girls. It's all there: Posh, Scary, Ginger.

Sporty and of course Baby. The thrill of it all...

Final Fantasy VII

Prepare to surrender your life to three black CDs, Final Fantasy VII is in many player's view the best video game ever!

Since the appearance of the first Japanese demos, Final Fantasy VII has been one of the most anticipated video games in recent history. Although this sort of attention is not unusual in the video game world, FFFVII stands out from other excessively hyped games by thoroughly deserving all the praise which has been heaped upon it. Already the largest selling PlayStation game in Japan, FFFVII is now set to storm our shores and convert the populace into dysfunctional obsessives concerned only with progressing through this monolith of a game.

The biggest strength of FFFVII, and the reason you'll be playing this game into the wee hours, is its stunningly intricate plot. While many past RPGs offered little more than your merry group of adventurers romping through the countryside, smiting the odd band of marauding pixies while in search of the key to the next dungeon or whatever, FFFVII gives you a real sense of living in its world. There's so much going on around you, relevant or not, that you almost feel overwhelmed by the immense scale of it all. It's not until you've been playing for a few days, when the main plot starts to emerge, that you start to appreciate the enormous depth and compass of the game.

In this respect, Final Fantasy VII is more like reading a good book than playing a game.

More than a game

FFFVII, is not just concerned with endless progression through the labyrinthine plot. To prevent stagnation, Square has included a number of sub games at various points. These include bike racing Road Rash-style, snowboarding and even a real-time strategy game! Quite frankly, many of them are worth playing on their own merits, and many are defiantly worth revisiting at the Golden Saucer.

It should come as no surprise however, that these additional games play so nicely, as the whole of FFFVII runs more slickly than a polar bear at an oil spill. Whether you're wandering, watching or walloping (the three main activities in FFFVII) everything is handled with the minimum of fuss. Even the fighting, which in other games can so often be very tedious, is well done, and departs from the traditional turn based system, incorporating that Square calls an 'active battle system'. This allows the combat function on a more active level and gives a better impression of melee combat than the usual rigid turn based systems. All charac-



So lead me wench.

ters can use magic simply by acquiring materia, which then develops experience and increases in power automatically. Much easier than having to deal with tiresome spell books and the like.

FFFVII has enough fine material to make for a great game, and once you add the spectacular production values to the equation you can begin to see why it has achieved instant classic status. With many RPGs and similar games, fine game mechanics are often let down by dodgy sprite based graphics which are commonly used due to constrictions of memory space. But here, the use of three discs has provided enough space for a verita-



Anime, this games

lifeblood.



Okay, I'll check that one over there....Hey man, it's burning! I ain't goin' in there.

Hey look! It's the Lady Of A Thousand Useless Bubbles!





I'm putting my money on the dragon..Centerbet are paying 20 to 1 odds.

ble orgy of polygons. Even the lowest level of graphics (the outdoor exploration scenes) are nicely done with a variety of camera angles. But every now and then, at major points in the game, you are rewarded with various rendered sequences, which are some of the best computer rendered artwork you'll ever see in a game.

A real 'interactive' game

Another good point about the graphics is how seamlessly the interactive and non-interactive segments are joined. It's not just the traditional "watch good graphics, play crap graphics". A high standard is maintained throughout the game. A fine example of this is the brain melting intro which transfers straight into the game without the slightest pause or drop in quality. If the graphics department at Square aren't already worn out from patting themselves on the back, they should do it some more!

The sound on FFFVII is probably the weak link in the package, but it's still pretty damn good. Listening to any music for the sort of length of time that this game requires is going to become painful at some point or other, but

in FFFVII this incidence is much lower than normal. Some people may complain that with CD technology the characters should speak rather than communicate through text windows, but with no voices provided you have more freedom to attach character to the people you meet. At least by avoiding speech, we in the English speaking world don't have to deal with bad voice acting from Americans.

If you've never liked RPGs or adventure games, then you may not take too well to FFFVII as it still has a lot of traditional RPG style action. If, on the other hand, you are more open minded, sit back and prepare for the cinematic odyssey of a lifetime. Take my case: Ten days after I was given the game I had completed the first disc, but things had happened. I lost all interest in household cleanliness, personal nutrition and pressing work commitments. I simply surrendered my life to the game, and my existence will have no other meaning until it's finished!



★ An instant classic, Final Fantasy VII will change your perception of what video games are about



I may not have Materia but I'll still kick your dopey ass!



The Final Fantasy series is rich and deep in it's textual layout and presentation. Although it has been said that you either love the game or hate it.

Graphically it's pure eyecandy but the menus get a tad tiresome sometimes.

BY: SQUARESOFT
PRICE: \$79.95
PLAYERS: ONE
ACCESSORIES: MEMORY CARD
CLASSIFICATION: G8

fluid

This is not a game in the usual sense, but an application for making your own electronic music



The flower of power.

Hence: flower-power.

Fluid contains two distinct parts, the 12 worlds where you 'perform' your tracks, and the groove editor where you get down to the serious business of, well, editing grooves.

What happens is that you visit a world to collect a bank of samples, then go back into the groove editor to get the track sounding how you want it, then visit a new world and so on. When you've finished that you'll have twelve tracks in the editor and twelve banks of samples. From there you're free to mix and match the samples to your hearts content, travel freely between worlds and so on.

At this point, some of you may be saying, "groove editor, samples, worlds? What the hell is this guy talking about will I be any the wiser if I actually see the thing?" Well,

the good news is that you don't have to be a Cubase nerd to be able to work the sequencer, and even the most musically challenged people should have no trouble getting their heads around the concept and start producing some fine tunes.

Making music

Electronic music is often composed with the aid of a sequencer, but what the groove editor in Fluid bears a more direct resemblance to is a multi track tape loop. This is due to the fact that when constructing the grooves you choose from fully prepared loops, and merely insert them into the groove rather than having to plot musical events, or in anyway display musical or compositional knowledge.

Once you've assembled your chosen loops into a couple of grooves for each track you can change some musical parameters such as BPM (50-200) and have a limited range of effects with which you can alter sounds. Joyously, these effects are track specific, so it's possible to have different variations across the eight tracks.

These effects mainly cover simple things like panning, auto panning, delay and reverb, but in a fine move also includes modulation. As anyone with even a passing interest in electronic music knows, judicious use of the effects can be the big difference between something lame and something fine, and the effects here make an enormous difference.

However, I was a little disappointed that the reverb was only a blanket setting fixed at a rather fast speed. Also, it is a shame that the producers did not include some form of resonant filter or emulator thereof.



Dolphins in space.

listen to your work

By now you should have a basic understanding of how the editor works, so it's time to head off and find out about the worlds where you perform your tracks. These 12 worlds have their own themes and locations, such as Peace (a quiet underwater setting), Wire (a more frantic world which sees you zipping through power lines and such) and other tasty delights with names like Abyss, Tube, Crystal, Temple and so on. As with the music, these settings have a decidedly techno style feel to them, and readers familiar with Warp's classic 'Motion' video release will find much to like here.

So now that you've made you track, what is there to do in these worlds? Well, you take control of the dolphin and have a swim around. This is far more interesting than it might initially sound.

When you're swimming around listening to your tracks, you also have four extra sounds available via the action buttons. The frequency of these of these tones changes as you move along d-pad, so even swimming around and holding an action button will give interesting results. Again, non musicians can rest assured that this function is



Hmm... we think this whole thing is really about the dole. Not dolphins.



Hmm... dolphins discovered Atlantis you know.

completely idiot proof and requires no musical skill whatsoever.

It doesn't end there, however, as even your position on screen has a bearing on what you hear. If you swim in the middle of the screen, you'll hear pretty much all of the material you selected in the groove editor. But swim towards the bottom of the screen and you'll let the beat keep rocking. Prefer to break it down? Just swim up towards the top of the screen.

Through exploration with each track, it's possible to have a great deal of control over these breaks, and it provides a definite extension of the musical material. If this were not enough, your friendly dolphin has a few moves up his blowhole that also affect the music, such as the barrel roll which gives a snare role fill.

The music

Music in Fluid is all techno based, taking most of its cues from acid, trance and jungle, but due to the fact that you can alter everything so comprehensively, you don't need to feel so constrained by the styles. I found

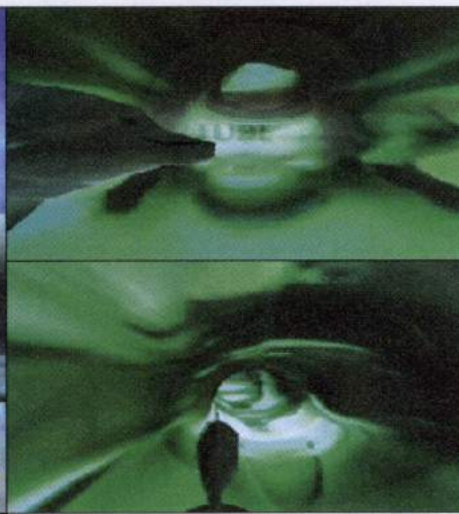
tracks in Fluid could be nicely slowed down to a more pleasing dub-trip hop feel, and subsequently you can get some good fat sounds.

However, some of the loops don't travel across BPMs so well, so you need to think about it a little bit before you can go cranking the tempo up to 200. If you don't like any techno or electronic music at all, then you're unlikely to find much entertainment here, but then again this really is an audience specific thing.

Fluid definitely isn't a game for everyone. For anyone serious about writing electronic music it may seem rather basic, and it is. But for those who do have an interest but can't afford their own sequencer or analog keyboards, Fluid is an excellent introduction to learning about music composition. And once you get a taste of what's possible with a PlayStation and a dolphin, you could well be hooked.



Not to be mistaken for the sort of game you're used to, Fluid is an enjoyable introduction to the world of electronic music.



The dolphin vortex.

BY: SONY

PRICE: \$59.95

PLAYERS: ONE

ACCESSORIES: MEMORY CARD

CLASSIFICATION: G



Compose your music with user-friendly audio tools.





Platinum Range

The Platinum Range is comprised of older PlayStation titles that are proven to be best-sellers. They are re-released at a budget price of \$39.95 to \$49.95, and are an excellent place to start when it comes to building up a respectable library of PlayStation games.



106 TEKKEN 2



107 WIPEOUT 2097



108 FORMULA 1



109 SOUL BLADE



110 V-RALLY



111 TIME CRISIS

Tekken 2

Long before the almighty Tekken 3 was...

Tekken 2, and it did rock

BY: NAMCO

PRICE: \$39.95

PLAYERS: ONE OR TWO

ACCESSORIES: MEMORY CARD

CLASSIFICATION: M15

When you turn on Tekken 2 you just can't help but be blown away by the now rather famous FMV sequence. When we reviewed this game back in our first issue, we commented on our burning desire to see a fully rendered Tekken film. Well, that doesn't seem to have hit the drawing board quite yet, but while you're waiting, you might want to have another look at Tekken 2, now re-released for the ever growing Platinum Range.

Tekken starts with ten characters to choose from, eight from the original with two newbies for the sequel. More characters become available as you battle your way

from success to success, a line up which includes the infamous Roger the Boxing Kangaroo and Alex the Jurassic Park reject.

In the original Tekken the characters had an abundance of special moves and in the sequel they've been greatly enhanced. For example, Nina's Flash Kick now connects with her opponents legs as well as head and midriff. New moves aside, Namco has packed plenty of secret goodies into the game. These include a first person view which puts you literally right into the fighting action, looking into the eyes of your opponent while your body is rendered in wire-frame.

Now, even after a year or so on, Tekken 2 still looks excellent. The graphics may appear slightly blocky when compared with newer titles like Soul Blade (certainly with some of the characters), but the player motion is absolutely superb - completely fluid and natural. Combat is much smoother than many of the games on the market. The backgrounds and light sourcing combine to create a real sense of 3D action. Small

touches such as opponents heads following you around the room and sparks from blocks reflecting off your characters all help develop a depth to gameplay that is not often apparent in other games.

Even if you're already a master at the original, you'll still find it takes time to become experienced with Tekken 2. The faster frame rate and more fluid motion will require you to refine your timing accordingly. But, needless to say, once you get started you'll find the game extremely enjoyable and dangerously addictive (don't fire it up before a work deadline or exam period - trust me).

Tekken 2 is a classic and always popular 3D fighter, it's success not doubt owing a great deal to the fact it was developed specifically as PSX title and not an arcade re-run. Truly a title that deserves it's place in the Platinum Range.

★★★★★

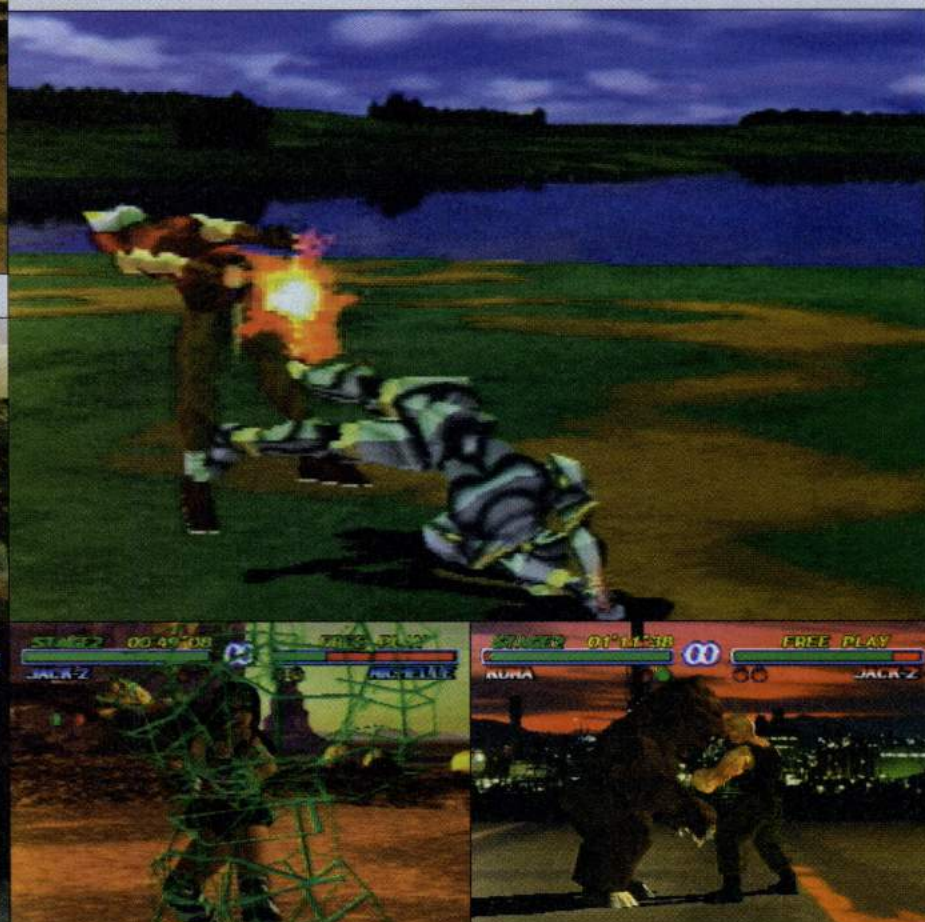
If anything, Tekken 2 has improved with age. An extraordinarily good 3D fighter



Dorithy vs The Tin Man.



Big game, big moves. Law's flip kicks can be devastating. A must move for two player.



The first person fighting mode can prove very difficult as you can't really tell how far you are from your opponent. Yes, that is a bear.

Wipeout 2097

The future is now, for Psygnosis has conveniently eliminated an entire century so we can sit in the hot seat of an antigravity race craft in the year 2097



Smooth driving, fast turns, loose beats. It's all here.

BY: PSYGNOSIS

PRICE: \$39.95

PLAYERS: ONE

ACCESSORIES: MEMORY CARD

NEGCON

CLASSIFICATION: G

Forged from a prequel which blew the minds of millions, WipeOut 2097 boasts improvements over the original in the areas of vehicle control, visual clarity and, of course, very keen speed. Weapons and boosts have returned, more and merrier, and a much more well balanced racing structure has emerged, giving everyone from complete novices to hardcore, bloody-eyed freaks a challenge to suit their skill.

The technical geniuses at Psygnosis have aimed to make this game a well lasting one - with much success. The difference in velocity between the introductory Venom class and the bullet quick Piranha class is enough to wet one's trousers. Each track is a certified masterpiece of design, with a variety of corners of all degrees and angles that will surely have you (and possibly even your grandma) up all night trying to slice a perfect lap!

Maximum velocity

You are able to manipulate your vehicle to point the nose up or down, which allows you to fly over sudden drops and sweep smoothly over rippled areas of track. This is where Wipeout has a definite advantage over car racing, and takes the game one step closer to being truly three dimensional. Your anti-gravity craft also have the exhilarating ability to slingshot through a corner, scraping the walls in a shower of sparks without slowing, which eliminates the main complaint about the first game.

The circuit scenery is astounding in its crisp and colourful detail. Bright, strobing colours are the trademark of WipeOut 2097. What's most impressive about the graphics is the speed at which they flash past. Slowdown occurs so infrequently that it's not an issue, which is even more impressive when you stop and take a look at the high level of detail around the tracks. There are no cheap looking

repetitive backgrounds, everything you see is placed in a 3D location, thus adding to the perceived movement. If any members of your household suffer from motion sickness, you'd best be advised to keep them away from the TV when this game is running!

You have the option of playing a singles race or taking the WipeOut challenge. Successfully winning the challenges reveals more tracks and even faster classes of racing, thus keeping the challenge constant - you can't play the hardest levels until you're good enough, so there's always the incentive to do better.

The super speed, gorgeous graphics, fiendish foes and the killer techno music complement all contribute to the fastest blast you'll probably ever experience in a game.



WipeOut 2097 stands the test of time better than anything else on the PlayStation, it's brilliant!



Sit back, relax and let the Designers Republic take you for a ride.

The speed is mind-numbing. The environment flies past in a blur and your eyes begin to bleed.

V-Rally Platinum

The PlayStation's first true rally game is back, and this time they've put the analog control back in! So is it worth buying again?

BY: INFOGRAMES

PRICE: \$39.95

PLAYERS: ONE OR TWO

ACCESSORIES: MEMORY CARD

DUAL SHOCK

CLASSIFICATION: G



The terrain is varied, including forest, snow, sand, dirt and tarmac.



During two player mode the screen may be split either horizontally or vertically. However, the vertical split won't leave you a whole lot of peripheral vision.

The attributes of V-Rally which made it so successful are as follows. Firstly, as with other greats like TOCA and Gran Turismo, it was made with realism at the forefront of the developers' minds. This means it has an outstanding lifespan, as it is no piece of cake to master.

Secondly, it has plentiful loads of tracks and modes. This gives it an outstanding lifespan, as there are always new cars to learn and championships to race in.

Thirdly, it has the choice of two-player split-screen racing split either way, once again resulting in a solid long term challenge, as you can never tire of racing against others who are no worse than yourself (but you can yank their controller out of its socket when they're winning!).

Apart from all that, it still looks marvelous. The courses are diverse not only in their scenery, but also in design. And interesting scenery is the one thing a rally game

should warrant. One race you'll be in Sweden ploughing through the snow, and next you're in the tropics with palm trees all around and a dirt road with little creeks here and there.

Faster and faster!

The three types of vehicle on offer are especially placed to suit all drivers, from the 1.6l 2WD babies to the 2l 4WD monsters. However, don't expect to get past the babies in a hurry as the handling characteristics are so real that it could well take you several weeks just to learn a good corner. Lord knows it did me. As in a real car, turning a mere 12 degrees at 200km/h is an easy way to spin out of control. Care and concentration are brought into this game in droves.

In the long run though, and this title provides a very long run, you'll grow to love it. The high level of difficulty grants a great

sense achievement when you finally start to master any of it. It's also very fast, and this is one of those titles that looks at its beat when in top gear. Ripping past the surroundings, they never glitch or blur. Even your friends will be sitting on the edge of their seats and swaying in motion with the car if you're a true pro.

If you've never played V-Rally and you like fast racing games, then you really should have a go of this one, especially now that it works with the Dual Shock analog pad. It's not as realistic as Colin's game, but even if you've got that, V-Rally is still worth a look, especially now that it's in the bargain Platinum range. Burn rubber, baby!



While it has been surpassed graphically by newer car games, V-Rally is still one of the most exhilarating games you can play



It wouldn't be a rally game without the mighty Subaru Impreza.

Time Crisis

If you've already picked up a copy of Point Blank and a G-Con light gun, then you simply must get a copy of Time Crisis



Shoot those bad guys. Why? because they're bad, silly. But don't shoot the civilians and the sherriff, and never shoot the deputy



Gee, I would'nt really want to be the one taking on that huge killer robot with a pistol.

You can duck for cover behind cars and desks etc. (bottom right).

As super agent Richard Miller, you must shoot your way through a bad guy infested island to rescue a damsel in distress, take out the evil organisation and, of course, save the world!

Being a light gun game, all you have to do is point and shoot, but the main feature is that you can also hide behind objects to avoid enemy fire. This automatically reloads your gun too, instead of having to shoot off-screen.

Each of the three stages consists of three areas, plus a boss stage which you must complete within the allocated time limit. Things to look out for are sharpshooting enemies in red, which you must shoot immediately; combustible objects, which explode and take out anybody nearby; and cameo appearances by orange baddies whom, when shot, add a few more precious seconds to your clock.

Big guns go BOOM!

The biggest, in fact only disappointment is that there is no two-player option. However, Time Crisis is incredibly fun to play, even if it's set 'on rails'. Hong Kong action movie fans will love the enemies that jump and somersault around the screen, and they die just as athletically, too! It's definitely the slickest gun game on the PlayStation; Die Hard Trilogy's gun-fest may be deliriously gory and offer higher interaction with the background (you leave bullet holes everywhere), but Time Crisis' superior production values and blistering pace prevail - there's still plenty of glass panels to shatter and monitors to smash in the computer rooms too! Being able to avoid enemy fire makes the game more dynamic and picking off someone the split second you assume firing position is very satisfying. The custom PlayStation game is even more fun with appearances by some freakish looking opponents - one bolt-throwing chap looks like a relative of Voldo from Soul Blade! By varying the path of the game depending on how accurate you are, Namco has expanded on what must be one of the most limiting genres to develop for, in terms of variety. The results speak for themselves.

The final boss confrontation of the arcade game will send your adrenalin levels off the scale, complete with a brilliant face-off at point blank range while you and the double-gun-packing bad dude circle each other; the previous area was set in a church too - John Woo eat your heart out!



Time Crisis is the best gun game you'll ever play and is an essential purchase if you enjoy this style

BY: NAMCO

PRICE: \$39.95

PLAYERS: ONE

ACCESSORIES: G-CON

CLASSIFICATION: MA15+



So, good guys can dress

in black... and red.

Formula 1

One of the most impressive early games for the PlayStation
is still one of the best

BY: PSYGNOSIS

PRICE: \$39.95

PLAYERS: ONE

ACCESSORIES: MEMORY CARD

NEGCON

CLASSIFICATION: G

Formula 1 was a huge hit due to its unprecedented realism and playability. Even in light of its successor, Formula 1 '97, many still regard the original as the better of the two. Touting a level of realism unseen before on a home console, this proved to be a big draw card at Formula 1's unveiling back in 1996.

Taking extreme care to emulate the true Formula 1 racing experience, no detail was overlooked in the production of the most realistic driving simulation at the time. Every possible aspect was included, even down to the amount of starting fuel selected at the beginning of the race.

Old school racing

Based on the 1995 Championship season, you are given the opportunity to choose from 13 teams and their corporate sponsors, and 26 drivers across the world, as well as 17 circuits of which all were modeled from actual drawings and architect designs. The fondly remembered Adelaide circuit appeared in this game, but has since been dropped from the championship. And the cars are now quite different from this year's line up, having none of the 1998 changes to the aerodynamics or tires, nor the pace car processions.

Formula 1 offers two different types of racing, depending whether you like the strategy and challenge of a full simulation, or prefer a more cut and dried arcade type race.

Grand Prix is the full simulation and takes into account all the factors and strategies of actual racing. It leaves you to determine the smaller details such as downforce on the car, as well as giving you factors such as tyre

wear and fuel stops to deal with.

Arcade mode allows you to jump straight into a race and pits you against the clock as well as other drivers. Collisions with other cars are not a problem, and levels of Steering and braking assistance are provided.

Cracks are showing

Presentation is one of the game's fortés. With many skill levels and options, the games is as polished as you are likely to ever see. The graphics are smooth and fast; the actual feeling of speed is excellent and easily compares to today's standards in terms of the overall fun experience.

As good as this game is, there are a couple of cracks which have opened up over the years. The first is the fact that unless you use the link up, Formula 1 is a single player only game. No split-screen option is available. While that means certain death for any lesser game, it is by no means the case here.

The graphics are where this game most obviously shows its age. The track, scenery and other cars seem awfully coarse compared against titles like Gran Turismo. But if you can get over that, the gameplay still holds up reasonably well.

Formula 1 was an outstanding racing game in its heyday, and while I had only recently reacquainted myself with the game for this review, it holds up surprisingly well against many racing games currently available, its own sequel included.

It probably won't look too good against the forthcoming Formula 1 '98 or Johnny Herbert GP, but for now it's easily the best value F1 game on the PlayStation.



Although it has lost much of its original gloss, Formula 1 Platinum still holds up well against newer titles



It's just so real!



The game looks and sounds like the television coverage of the race itself. From the commentary to the replays and on-screen information graphics.



Adelaide alive! Step back in time and drive the Australian Grand Prix in the city of churches.

Soul Blade

Swashbuckling skeletons and a scantily clad Greek Goddess are two of the combatants in the home conversion of Soul Blade

Although it could very easily be described as Tekken with weapons, Soul Blade is still a top shelf game that you can now get for half of the cost. If you're after solid combos, extremely colourful characters and a cast of fighting freaks which all love to slice and dice their enemies, this game is still probably the best weapon based fighting game you could get.

The basic idea for the game is very much the same as Tekken: two fighters enter a 3D ring and thump each other about a bit until only one is left standing. But, as the name implies, Soul Blade does have something unique to offer - swords. All of the fighters have a contact weapon of choice and some of them are pretty damn awe inspiring (like Sigfreid's huge double-handed sword).

The game gives you ten fighters to choose from, all of them with a variety of special moves, combos and extendable multi-part throws (just like Tekken).

However, Soul Blade plays faster than T2 and gives you a few new innovations to keep you eager for more. The most obvious of these is the Critical Edge strike, which is basically a huge tantrum with blade attached, a move guaranteed to see your character swinging all over the place and doing a lot of unblockable damage. Soul Blade also uses the 3rd dimension more effectively as a part of the game-play, as you can dodge incoming attacks and then counter, by attacking your foe from the side. This takes a bit of perfecting, but it helps a lot and is far more effective (and enjoyable) than just slug-ging it out toe to toe.

The graphics for Soul Blade are excellent, kicking off with a brilliantly animated intro. The characters look great, with animated faces and lips that move when they make victory speeches at the end of a bout. Combat is fast-paced, and the weapons look sensational as well, highlighted by a trail of translucent energy when they swing

through the air.

Even though there are a lot of 3D fighters around, Soul Blade is more than a worthy addition to the fold, as it really impresses graphically, and there is plenty of gameplay to back it up.

★★★★★

Soul Blade is a must if you enjoyed any of the Tekken games and are after a budget fix of fistcuff frenzy

BY: **NAMCO**

PRICE: **\$39.95**

PLAYERS: **ONE OR TWO**

ACCESSORIES: **MEMORY CARD**

CLASSIFICATION: **M15**



Have at you fiend!



There are a variety of special moves, throws and combos to hack and slash at your opponent with. All of these have spectacular moving camera angles to keep you on your toes.

PlayStation Terminology

2D - Characters and background or foreground layers that look flat. Two dimensional images only have height and width.

3D - Characters or surrounds that look three dimensional as in having height, width and depth.

AI - Stands for 'artificial intelligence', and refers to how smart the CPU opponents in a game are.

Analogue - Or analog, has an infinite set of values, where as digital is either on or off. For example, in driving games an analog controller can allow the player to make a long, smooth turn when steering, providing the game has been programmed with analog compatibility.

AV lead - Audio visual lead that connects from the PlayStation to the television with the yellow, red and white RCA plugs for video and audio.

Borders - The black strips at the top and bottom of the screen. They are usually thicker on games originally programmed to NTSC standard and then converted to PAL, because the NTSC screen size has fewer horizontal lines (525) than PAL (625), resulting in 50 lines top and bottom not being used.

Bugs - Flaws or imperfections in the code of the game which cause unexpected events to happen. They are usually discovered and fixed during the game's development, although occasionally they may go unnoticed and remain in the finished game.

C and C++ - Computer programming languages that most games are made with. The Net Yaroze is a PlayStation that can be programmed in 'C' by home hobbyists.

Capcom - Well respected Japanese publisher and developer of arcade and home videogames, including Street Fighter and Resident Evil.

Clipping - Refers to when the graphics of a game, especially 3D polygons, appear to separate or converge at the joins. Happens most often in 3D action games in which the camera angle is controlled by the computer.

CPU - Or Central Processing Unit, is the main chip in a computer which, much like the engine of a car, everything else relies on to keep running. A CPU opponent in a game is one whose actions are determined by the computer in response to the player's actions.

Combo - Refers to a combination of moves that is executed in one continuous string, usually in fighting games.

D-Pad - The cross pad under the left

thumb on a joystick. Operates in digital mode with a total of eight directions (N, NE, E, etc.).

Digital - Electronic information represented in only two states, 'on' and 'off' or '1' and '0', and is the basis of every computer's operation. In reference to joypads, a digital one allows you to only move in one direction at a time, or not at all.

Dual Shock - The new standard in PlayStation control pads, the Dual Shock features conventional digital controls as well as two analog thumb sticks, and also features a vibration mode that shakes the pad in response to game actions (such as hitting a curb in a driving game), created by two small motors with offset weights.

Engine - As in 'the graphic engine of a game'. The basic set of instructions and algorithms that move the graphics around on screen, in either two or three dimensions. Once created, a successful engine can be re-used and refined for a new game, for example Codemasters' Colin McRae Rally was based on the engine of the earlier TOCA Touring Cars.

First Person Perspective - A first person game is presented with the player seeing what their character in the game sees. Most famously used in the game Doom.

FPS - The Frames Per Second, or the rate at which the graphics are refreshed on screen. Most games operate between 12 to 25fps, however many hi-res games also run at 50fps

Full Motion Video - Or FMV, is a generic term used to describe the non-interactive sequences of a game such as the introduction. Real FMV can feature actual footage of actors and sets, although more commonly a computer rendered sequence is used.

Gameplay - Refers to the overall experience of playing a game, encompassing a wide range of factors such as easy of play, addictiveness, and overall enjoyability. Game with good gameplay you'll come back to time and time again, those with poor gameplay will sit on the shelf gathering dust.

G-Con - The G-Con is Namco's official gun for the PlayStation and is compatible only with software marked SLPH 00034.

JogCon - A new PlayStation analog controller with force feedback, made by Namco.

Konami - Well respected Japanese publisher and developer of arcade and

home videogames, including Metal Gear Solid.

Lara - Ms. Lara Croft first appeared in the game Tomb Raider. She then went on to become a world wide celebrity, starring on stage with U2, and on the cover of every publication in the Free World, and will soon be portrayed in a feature length Hollywood film.

Link Cable - Connects two PlayStations for head-to-head multiplayer action on two TVs.

Loading - Game information stored on the CD has to be loaded into the PlayStation's RAM before it's ready to play. Some games do this all at once before the level starts, while others stream the data off the CD as it's needed.

Memory Card - A memory card is used to save information such as new items, levels and statistics acquired during play, and which can then be re-loaded next time the game is played. Saves having to write down long passwords.

Mouse - An official mouse and mat that can be used with some types of games. Plugs into controller port.

Multiplayer - A game that is multiplayer means that it can be simultaneously played by more than one person.

Multitap - An accessory that allows four extra players to play simultaneously with games which support it. Eight people can play off one machine if you have two multitaps.

Namco - Well respected Japanese publisher and developer of arcade and PlayStation videogames, including Tekken 3.

NegCon - Namco controller that was the first analog pad for the PlayStation. Works by rotating opposing sides of the controller.

NTSC - The television and video signal used in Japan and America and runs at 50Hz

Oddworld - The setting for the most popular 2D adventure series starring Abe the Mudokon.

Options - The interface screens of a game where you can change variables such as sound volume, controller configuration and other set-up factors.

PAL - The television standard used in Australia and most of Europe, running at 60Hz. PAL games and TVs are incompatible with NTSC systems used in Japan and America.

Platinum Range - The Platinum range is a selection of best-selling games that have been re-released at a much

cheaper price.

Polygons - The graphics that are used to create three dimensional characters and environments which appear to be solid.

PSX - An abbreviation of PlayStation X, Sony's early codename for the PlayStation.

Re-Draw - The horizon point in a game where new graphics are drawn and first appear on the screen. Also known as 'pop-up'.

Render - A highly detailed image, or sequence of, created on powerful computers such as Silicon Graphics workstations. Rendered sequences are used for many non-interactive parts of games and are often mistakenly called FMV.

Resolution - Either 'hi-res' or 'lo-res', resolution refers to the number of pixels on screen at the same time, the more pixels, the better the game looks. Hi-res has 640 X 480 pixels, whereas lo-res is only 320 X 240.

RFU adaptor - A lead that connects the PlayStation to older model televisions through the antenna socket.

RPG - Role Playing Game. An example is the Final Fantasy series.

SCEE - Sony Computer Entertainment Europe.

Sim - Short for simulation. An example of this is the TOCA Touring Cars, which attempts to recreate the realistic aspects of motor racing, as opposed to being an arcade-style racing game.

Split-screen - The screen is split either vertically or horizontally, allowing for two or more players to play simultaneously.

Sprites - Two dimensional graphics used often for objects which only need to be displayed from one angle. An example is the characters in Street fighter or the trees by the side of the road in Colin McRae Rally.

Squaresoft - Well respected Japanese publisher and developer of home videogames, including Final Fantasy VII.

TBA - Abbreviation for 'To Be Announced'.

Texture Mapping - The process of putting a detail or picture on the surfaces of a polygon. Due to memory restrictions, textures are often repeated on large surfaces, giving a tiled appearance.

Third-Person Perspective - 3D games in which the playable character is visible from behind on screen are called third-person, for example Tomb Raider.

Yaroze - A programmable PlayStation that can be used to make games with.

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Ultimate Fight
For Justice,
There is
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